



# HOW OUR WORKING PEOPLE LIVE

COOPERATIVE



# HOW OUR WORKING PEOPLE LIVE

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## I.

### THE MERTHYR IRON WORKER.

**B**OUND to Merthyr Tydfil, *via* Hereford, the Englishman feels himself in Wales as soon as he has passed Pontrilas. In spite of its proximity to the Principality, Herefordshire is a thoroughly English-looking county. Its big, brown-and-white, dew-lapped, curly cattle ; its chocolate-coloured fallows ; its hop-poles stacked into wigwams above long rows of cabbages as plump as the Herefordshire lasses ; its old orchards, dotted with remnant crimson apples, that glow like railway rear-lamps on the black, crooked branches, and bushed with dull-green mistletoe ; its red brick cottages, so multitudinously cross-beamed with cracked, hoary timber that they look like patchwork quilts worn white and gaping at the seams ; all these are English in their aspect. But Monmouthshire, though legally English, is so Welsh in its scenery, the names of its places, and the look and talk of its inhabitants, that you run through it into Glamorganshire without knowing when

you have crossed the border. Some of the Glamorganshire people, by-the-bye, have the odd notion that England annexes a Welsh county every fifty years. It is vain to point out that England and Wales are, politically, but one kingdom, and that Monmouthshire—the proof appealed to—has ceased to be Gwent, and taken its place in the Oxford Circuit, for a good deal more than fifty years. The Welsh patriots cannot be persuaded that England is not bent on gobbling up their country by cruel right of might.

In whatever circuit it may figure, however, Monmouthshire, as I have said, is still an unmistakably Cambrian county. The men, women, and children who storm the close, smudged, colliers'-forecastle-like third-class carriages at Pontypool Road are all jabbering Welsh. It sounds very much like a pebbly mountain-stream—plaintively liquid music jagged with guttural discords. It is queer to hear the grimy small boys rolling and rattling out the Celtic sounds so readily. Every now and then they grin as they glance slyly from their companions in the carriage to the stranger on the platform ; of course they are making fun of the Cockney, and chuckling at the thought that they can call him to his face all kinds of uncomplimentary names without being brought to book. The men have a surly, suspicious, shut-up look, and, as they talk, glance over their shoulders like conspirators. Some of them are connected in one way or another with the mines, and rush to the windows to exchange gruff shouts with the men on the black mineral trains that rumble past. But all the

women seem good-tempered. Perhaps, in spite of their clear, friendly eyes and laughing mouths, they are not very pretty, as a rule ; but, at any rate, their bronzed faces look picturesque as they peep out of the checked woollen kerchiefs that hood their hats and bonnets. Nearly all of them wear checked woollen shawls, and are in charge of market-baskets as big as clothes-baskets, which they lug about as merrily as if they were mere reticules. From window to window the stranger oscillates, like the donkey between the two bundles of hay, throughout that striking west-country ride. Here is a little church perched, like a twelfth-cake ornament, on a mound to which there seems to be no thoroughfare but meadow-paths ; and there in the valley is a low grey nave, with a box-like chancel at one end, and a tiny square tower at the other, all blotted with the black pyramids of the surrounding yews. On both hands hills high enough to be called mountains interfold ; some plumed with fiery fern, littered with limestone, and heaped and patched with coal-dust ; some clad from base to summit with feathery dim-golden foliage ; and others treeless, shaggy-grassed, rush-dotted, with a few wild-looking sheep, and ponies, and cattle browsing on the coarse herbage, low green and grey stone walls crawling up their sides like great caterpillars, and solitary cottages dropped on them far away like specks of whitewash. At the foot of the mountains there is a patchwork of sloping polygonal closes, and here and there a slovenly little white farmstead with glossy ivy on the gable of its church-like barn. Above mossy tumble-down stone walls,

with tufts of crinkled primrose leaves in every moist cranny, rise the weedy gables of ruined cottages, and the chimney stalks of forsaken Works lean back in clumps of red and yellow wood, like fallen obelisks in a deserted city which the forest has revindicated. But on all sides there are signs of still active mineral industry. Miners' cottages stand in terraces on the hill-sides, pure white cottages, streaky-white, yellow, grey, brown, and black, with staring white borders to the window-frames and doorways ; and down the hill-sides, cutting through the variegated woods and scarring the green grass, steep black tramways are ruled straight like penmarks. The Rail is as ubiquitous as Paul Pry in this coal-and-iron district—Paul Pry without his apology. It pushes itself wherever it pleases in an uncompromising fashion that shows that it considers anything that gets in *its* way as the intruder. It steers straight from the mountain top, at a white village scattered on a river's broken bank, as if it meant to run sheer down the chimneys. It straddles across the green landscape on stone bridges almost as black as the coal that rattles over them. It spans a valley on a long viaduct so losty and so fragile-looking that the brain swims when the eye falls on the river and the rails beneath. It is almost impossible to lose sight of switches, signal-posts, locomotives, big trucks, little trucks, and—on trams to match—trucks so very little that they look like bakers' baskets which a sweep has borrowed.

At Quaker's Yard—a little hill-side station—carriages

are changed for Merthyr ; a flight of steps leading down to a lower line. The name of the station is suggestive, and I asked its meaning of an old Welshman, with whom I foregathered there—a most genial old Welshman. He had a theory that we ought to be grateful for everything that happens except elections, which, he said, in Wales had caused feuds that dozens of years could not heal. Whilst he spoke a trainful of red-coats were landing a few miles further up the line to cow the fierce "hill-folk" who had risen round Blaenavon. He carried off the entire staff of the Quaker's Yard station in file, like stalking geese, to imbibe warm beverages at his expense at a lonely little "hotel" on the hill-side. And when we parted, after a fifteen minutes' acquaintance, he almost wrung my arm out of the socket, as he pumped away at my hand, and expressed his fervent wishes that we might speedily meet again. In spite of what I have said of the surly, suspicious look of Welshmen, they thaw rapidly to an Englishman who takes an interest in their country, and is not asinine enough to sneer at everything Welsh as half-barbarian, as too many ignorant Englishmen, both of the tourist and the bagman species, are fond of doing.

But I was talking of the etymology of Quaker's Yard. My friend could only tell me that the name in Welsh was Quaker's *Grave*-yard, that the Welsh for Quaker was Quacker (the Welsh being too brave a nation to have a native name for quaking), and that there were scarcely any Quakers in Wales. This information was somewhat of the "Snakes in Iceland" type, but my informant told

me something more interesting about the station that intervenes between Quaker's Yard and Merthyr. "Troed-yrrhiew" he interpreted as meaning "this is the thoroughfare;" and said that his mother could remember the time when the place—with mines and iron-works encircling it now—was simply a short cut from lonely farm to farm. The line from Quaker's Yard to Merthyr is a tangent to the curves of the Taff. In the lower reaches there are pools of dark water, with ivy-clad trunks dipping golden-leaved branches into them; but, as the valley rises to the mountains—except in time of flood—the Taff is often only represented by a sloping bed of stones. The nearer the train gets to Merthyr, the grimmer the country becomes. The iron-smelting metropolis is a dirty, straggling town, sprawling up barren mountains, like a bundle of dirty rags spread out in faintest hope of their bleaching, with belching furnaces, and black table-lands of rubbish all around.

Little more than a century ago, Merthyr was a village dozing in the hollow of the hills; and to this day it retains the village type. It is a village stretched a good deal each way, with modern patches on the strained ancient cloth. It has banks, 'buses, and barracks, plate-glass shop-fronts, hansoms, and a huge poorhouse—satirically built on a rubbish heap; but the streets are narrow and winding, dark and dirty. A great many of the houses are mere cottages, with slovenly rough-walled gardens raised above the road, or sunk below the road, and some of them in the side lanes poke their noses, so

to speak, into one another's faces as intrusively as the hovels of any London court. Off a main thoroughfare there is a sloping piece of waste ground, littered with big stones, that looks as wild as the bottom of a mountain watercourse. Merthyr has Turkish baths, but it has also Turkish mal-odours. It is a very interesting place to visit, but scarcely the place which a lover of the comfortable would select as a residence. The better class of houses—comparatively very few—all look as if they were cross at not being able to keep their faces clean. The abundance of places of worship, and the far greater abundance of public-houses, are two of the social features of Merthyr which obtrude themselves on the stranger's notice. I should weary my readers if I were to write out its list of Sions, Carmels, Elims, Capel Nazareths, &c. ; and as to the publics, they are "thick as thieves," in some places clustering by the three and four together. The police, who wear tunics and helmets like City constables, and, in proportion to the population they have to look after, are a numerically weak force, must have anything but a sinecure in a town that needs so many fountains to quench its thirst.

Of places of worship and publics, however, I shall have to speak again presently. To get an introduction to the underground ironworkers of Merthyr, I started for the offices of the Plymouth Iron Works, a mile or so from the parish church. I passed houses black, white, and grey, yellow, and mouse-coloured ; a piebald house, too—brick accentuating the chimney-vents like swollen

veins in its stone walls, and blocking up what had once been its windows. In raised gardens of what looked like blacksmiths' small coal, "fenced" from the road with very intermittent boulders, a few bony cabbage-stalks were shamming to grow, and a more plentiful crop of groundsel was comparatively flourishing. A little boy sat resting on a low, roadside wall, with a block of coal as big as a double-quatern loaf beside him. Muddy streamlets were cascading from the hill-side ; a stream of cheap-coffee-house coffee, creamed with scummy bubbles, rushed along in a watercourse. Rails and dingy railway-bridges, and flat-topped sloping piles of black rubbish, like huge inchoate railway embankments of blacklead, ran and rose on the right hand and the left. Notwithstanding these surroundings, and the gaunt, black wheels and dirty-drab chimney-stalks that tower above them, the offices have an oddly home-like look. They are a cluster of low, old, mellow buildings, with moss and ivy, lichen, and house-leek on them. A woman comes out of them dangling a pound of dumpy candles in her hand, just as if she had been making her purchase in a village shop begirt with elms and corn-fields. An official obligingly comes out also, to see if he can find any one to guide me to a pit where I may come across the coal-agent. No one happening to be at hand, he advises me to follow a man he points out in the distance, and speak to the men at the mouth of the first pit I come to. There is something funny in hearing pits spoken of as if they were as plentiful as hips and haws. My path leads past a great

embankment of cinders, still smouldering, as the lazily curling white-smoke-wreaths show ; past great blocks of slag that look like the shell-and-pebble-plummed lumps of clay found on our eastern sea-coast ; across a tramway, whose ballasting, save where it is frozen in the shade, seems made of very sticky blacking ; up a steep bank of damp coal-dust ; over a little wall ; and along another line of rails, as filthy as the former, which curves out of a low, goblinish tunnel-opening in the hill-side, and whose metals are being freed from the viscous mud that clings to them by a bent old man, and a girl in semi-masculine costume, and with a most unfeminine face. On one side, the lambent tongues of the Plymouth furnaces—pale-pink in the bright day-light—are flickering above gushing and billowing steam ; on the other, are one or two yellow residences that rank, I suppose, as cottages *ornées* in Merthyr—the ornament of one being a great slab of coal set up upon its lawn ; low heaps of iron-ore stacked like stone to be broken for road-mending, and each block marked with its miner's number, letter, or distinctive cross ; seven or eight young women in coarse, sleeved pinapores, handkerchiefs tightly bound over their heads, battered hats, bristling with frayed feathers, blue stockings, and, in some instances, masculine overalls—some helping to unload the trucks that come up the shaft, and others pottering with shovels about the “tip ;” a little hovel at the pit-mouth ; a wooden frame above it, gibbeting two great wheels, with broad, flat, glossy bands, that look like magnified figs of negro-head tobacco ; and

at the foot of the tip, where more girls and a boy or two are shovelling coal, an engine-house to which access is obtained by a narrow plank uncomfortably near to a hot pipe. This is an iron-mine proper—a “mine-pit,” as it is called in the neighbourhood, “mine” being the Glamorganshire miner’s equivalent for “ore.” The engineer negotiates with the banksman to become my cicerone, and invites me into the engine-room, to perform my underground toilette. When I have tied a handkerchief round my head, and plastered the engineer’s Jim Crow down upon it, buttoned myself into his greasy monkey-jacket, and tucked my trousers into my boots, he tells me with a chuckle that my wife wouldn’t know me now, and turns me out for the inspection of the tip girls, whose reception is fuller of fun than of flattery. My guide is a short, civil fellow, with a bronzed, ruddy face like a sailor’s. Fifteen shillings a-week, he says, he gets; the overman getting 30s.; and the engineman 2s. 6d. a-day. The miners, working by the ton, must be “good men,” he adds, to average 20s. a-week. We step on to a kind of cage, open at two sides; the wheels begin to revolve, slowly at first, more rapidly soon, and in less than half-a-minute we have dropped to the bottom of the downcast. When men are going up or down, the engine does not work quite so fast as when laden or empty trucks are the only freight. The cavernous walls of the shaft drip on us as we go down, and when the cage grounds there is a splash of water as if we had been lowered into a well. We are two hundred feet nearer the centre of the earth,

moreover, than we were twenty-five seconds before ; but otherwise, the descent is very much like going down in an hotel luggage-lift. It is a very miry, murky cellar we have got down into, however. We sink almost up to the calves in mud, and were it not for the banksman's lamp, when we have moved a few feet from the bottom of the shaft, we should be in total darkness. A shout comes out of it, and we have to squeeze ourselves against the rough side of the low vault, to make room for a horse that stumbles by, drawing a laden truck. The mine slopes, until we are between three and four hundred yards beneath the surface, and have colliers working in another pit above our heads. In the "heading," or main thoroughfare, the walking is very slushy, and unseen waters gurgle by with an eerie sound ; but the "stalls" are dry enough. A long back here, however, must crook itself into a sickle, and the foothold is loose shingle. These stalls are divergences from the heading, which are like circumflex accents when first commenced, and elongate into the shape of horse-shoes and magnets. One man works in each arm, and the two build up a "gob," or partition wall, of "shell," or rubbish, between them. The ore, according to its quality, or the way in which it "proves," has various names—"riders," "black pin," "hauling pin," "spotted vein," and "blue vein," the last making the best foundry iron. The miner hammers a long chisel into the rock, and when he has made his hole, pours in his blasting powder, and lights his fuse ; running into a neighbouring stall for shelter

until the explosion takes place. If the "mine" is blown out in too large blocks for convenient carriage, he splits it up with his pick. Between the entrances to each stall, in order that a current of air may sweep round it, a wooden door or a curtain of sacking stretches across the heading. In some places the walls of the heading are mortared to "keep the air right," and in others there are narrow side air-channels, like mill-streams. My guide is very sorry that he cannot show me any "gas," but as the next best thing to it, points out where the ceiling of the vault was broken by an explosion two days before. Now and then an arch of masonry spans the heading, and sometimes we walk beneath crossed timbers. The banksman carries a flaring oil-lamp which he has borrowed of the engineman, and several of the miners are smoking. They are quite satisfied with the inspection which the two firemen made in the early morning before any of the miners were allowed to come down. As they are underground nearly twelve hours, however, and the leaving open of one of the heading-doors might fill a stall with gas, it seems strange that they should look so secure. We go into the fireman's lodge, a gloomy little cave, with safety-lamps hung against the wall, and a pale lean man rubbing away at one of them in silence like a magician in a nursery legend. The great chain on the great winch that rumbles round as laden trucks run down, and empty trucks rush up a steep incline, looms through the dusk like a boa coiled round a fallen tree trunk. We hear a stamping

of hoofs and a champing of fodder ; "Wo-ho !" cries the banksman ; and we grope our way past the heels of half-a-dozen cart-horses, that never see sun-light, eating their dreary dinner in utter darkness. In spite of their lights, the miners whom we pass at dinner do not look more cheerful picknickers. They squat on the hard stones, munching a little bread and cheese, and washing it down with cold tea. It is odd as we splash along to see every now and then a light twinkling like a glow-worm, and to hear wild Welsh words wandering towards us from no visible speaker. The banksman flings back a Welsh answer, and on we flounder through the gloom. As we mount to daylight once more—after calling our steam coachman's attention to our wish to start, by three or four tugs at his cord check-string—the pit lads give me a final taste of mine *diablerie*. A bevy of them are going down as we are coming up, and when the cages cross, they raise a yell which rings round and round the great, dark jagged well like the enviously despairing lamentations of lost spirits.

Whilst I was resuming my own garments in the engine-room, the engine-man favoured me with his views on Church and State. Nine people out of ten were Nonconformists in Wales—they didn't want no church. He had voted for Henry Richard partly because the master was for him, but chiefly because he was a Nonconformist —yes, sure. A miner's wife of whom I asked the secret of Mr. Richard's popularity, informed me that it was because he was a "real Welshman." The mining

population of South Wales appear to be very enthusiastic politicians. Thousands assembled in the Merthyr Market Square, and sang, "Land of my fathers," after the late declaration of the poll. During my visit bunches of evergreens, adorned with party-rosettes, were still hanging over some of the doors, and little toddlers, that could hardly talk, were lisping, "Fothergill for ever," and chanting rhymes about "the Bruce." The satire of these political nursery rhymes would not seem to be very caustic if a stanza I picked up may be taken as an average sample :—

" There was an ex-butcher named Morgan,  
Who possessed an old barrel organ,  
And the more that he played,  
The more people prayed  
To be relieved of him and his jargon."

Having seen ironstone mined, I started next to Dowlais to see it worked. On the right in the valley are the disused Pen-y-darran Works, now under repair, but still presenting a very dismantled appearance. The work-bell rusts in its turret. The clock stands still at a quarter to eleven. Chimney stalks send out no smoke, furnace-mouths vomit no flame. Roofless walls stretch along like ruined cloisters. Black wheels sulk motionless at the top of their high scaffolds. The ground is covered with a dismal litter of rusty moulds and black boilers like blasted asteroids. The dark stream that rushes past out of the arched hill-side seems to flout the Iron Works out of work. In strange contrast to that silent place brawls on for ever the deafening hubbub of

huge Dowlais—the largest Iron Works in the world. It employs 9,000 hands, 4,000 under and 5,000 above ground. Its vast mounds of smouldering rubbish, on which trucks are tilting still, have been rising for a hundred years, and hem the works in like Salisbury Crags of soot. It seems as if they must soon overtop the bare mountains behind, where long-tailed, wild-eyed black ponies, feeding amongst rushes and ponds and outcropping limestone, stare with the supercilious glance of freemen on slaves at the big horse that trots by between the trams, dragging a train of trucks, and at the tip-women who jump into them as they jog on, and settle themselves down in a heap to enjoy a quiet pipe before they get to work.

A little town, or rather very big village, of course, has grown on to the Works : a dirty, slovenly, big village, in which “the clartier, the cosier” seems to be a very common motto. There are a great many mud-splashed ducks in it, and a great many draggletailed mothers of six about to become mothers of seven in the paulopost-future. Typhus, also, is no stranger at Dowlais. But a respectable per centage of the cottages, nevertheless, have tidy living-rooms, and almost all, whether tidy or untidy, have a warm, fully-furnished look that is very different from the pinched, bare, hungry aspect of the rooms to be seen in many parts of the East-end of London, for instance. Money is plainly made here, and if a good deal of it is lavished upon beer, some of it, at any rate, is left for food and furniture. Every cottage-

door stands wide open in Dowlais, and therefore the stranger can observe its domesticities without the least intrusion. He sees good fires (coals in Dowlais are 8s. or 9s. a ton), and tea-trays brought out at abnormal hours in English estimation. He sniffs the fumes of oleaginous cookery. In cottage after cottage, too, he sees a handsome, old-fashioned eight-day clock, sometimes a good sofa, and almost universally either a dresser or a chest of drawers, and a table, set out with glass and crockery. I should add that the Dowlais Iron Company has built schools in which nearly 2,000 children are educated, and whose architecture contrasts queerly with that of the pupils' homes ; and that it supports a reading-room.

Native Indians used to be astonished at the dinginess of the old heavy house in Leadenhall Street which once governed their country, and a stranger is likely to feel a somewhat analogous astonishment at first sight of the shoulder-rubbed offices of the Dowlais Company. Dowlais is a place, however, in which dirt is coined into gold, and therefore its magnates, with small exercise of philosophy, can transact their business in a building which looks as if it had never heard of painters, white-washers, and charwomen. The press does not seem to find much favour at Dowlais, on account of wild legends which it has set afloat anent the Works. One, concerning "Lady Guest and her Book-keeper," the courteous manager informs me, has been tossing in the papers for the last twenty years, although there is not an atom of fact to buoy it up. I promise not to exercise my

"mythopœic" faculty, and am speedily furnished with a pass, which, in the course of my wanderings, I am only once challenged to produce. A stranger's first feeling, on being turned adrift in Dowlais, is one of utter bewilderment. He hears a sighing roar like that of ocean, a hiss of steam, a clank of iron, a whir of wheels; sulphurous smoke and a spray of grit choke his nostrils; he sees round keeps and angular bastions, with fire leaping from their summit and glowing at their base; a forest of chimney-stalks; a jumble of mysterious buildings, of all shapes and sizes; a maze of muddy rails, mounds of coal and lime, piles of metal, timber, and white brick; an army of men, women, and children, whose diverse garments are turned into a uniform by their unvarying grime-facings. The slush on the ground is black as ink and sticky as tar, and men and girls are shovelling it up by truck-loads. Wherever the dazed visitor seeks rest for the sole of his foot, a tram-horse trots right at him. It is at first a bewildering nightmare vision merely—that lurid Valley of the Shadow of Tips.

But presently there comes a glimpse of cosmos in the chaos. Those huge, red-brown, ringed structures, at the head of the valley—rooks for Titans' chess—bannered with flame, galleried like lighthouses, and with gaping caves of fire at the bottom, must be the blast-furnaces. Those arched-brick boilers, with regulators perking above them, like pawn-brokers' signs minus a ball, slides like box-iron doors, and fussy puffs of steam, must have something to do in generating the blast. Those huge

pipes, that cross the valley like tubular bridges for trains of well-grown Lilliputians, must convey it. To see the blast-furnaces fed, you ascend to the higher ground by narrow, zigzag steps, like cliff-side stairs ; and, if you shut your eyes, the sighing roar of the furnaces might make you fancy yourself, indeed, at the sea-shore. Again you plunge into apparent chaos : embankments, culverts, and locomotives coming in “ promiscuous-like ” from the wild country round ; more trucks, more viscous mud, more pinafored girls—very dirty, very bold-eyed, and yet squalidly picturesque, with their cheap ear-rings and their coloured kerchiefs, now and then giving a hint of a concealed mild chignon. They ply their shovels like navvies, and lift blocks of stone and coal that make your arms ache as you fancy yourself lifting them. One of them, red from head to foot, stands in a truck, shaping a load of rusty grist that runs in from a rough mill with a black beam bobbing above : coarse cocoa is what the grist looks like. You see more piles of lime and sand and coal, with curved, many-pronged forks, like strays from a devil’s set, lying beside them ; and heaps and truck-loads of ironstone, rust-red, clay-yellow, and flinty grey. “ This is Welsh-mine-Dowlais,” says an old fellow, pointing to a smoking cairn, “ and yonder’s Northampton. We mix the iron as if we was making a pudding.” You trip over great iron mushrooms with the stalk run through the cap, and your hot feet tell you presently that you are walking on an iron pavement. Just off the furnace-galleries old men sit in low hovels, watching

their younger mates as they wheel their loads of furnace-fodder on to the clanking weighing-machine. "Every charge that goes in is weighed," says your old man—"there's so much plunder." The flames leap up and roar like caged lions longing to get out as one man turns the wheel that lifts or lowers the beam that hangs over the furnace-mouth; and then, merely putting on a thick waistcoat to save his shirt, his fellow wheels his barrow-load of fuel to the burning pit and tilts it in (whilst the red fire-tongues seem to lick right round him) as coolly as a railway porter trundling trunks to a luggage-van. It is a strange scene to see sparrows hopping about in, and a tidy woman and a clean-faced little girl coming along with "father's dinner."

Once more at the foot of a blast furnace you see the molten metal running out of a spout into an iron-truck in a fire-fall so apparently motionless, that it looks far more like a fixed heated bar. A man goes up to the wheeled cauldron, dips his spade into it like a spoon into a jar of treacle, and examines what he brings out just as if he was going to taste it. Another man wants to light his pipe, and so he dips a rod into the molten metal, and applies the glowing button he fishes up to his pipe-bowl as ordinary smokers use a commonplace vesuvian. Presently you see what looks very much like a piece of infernal irrigation. An oblong black bed is ploughed in ridge and furrow. With a spray of fire, and blistering like toasted cheese the farther it gets from the furnace, a red-hot stream flows along the side of the bed: aided

by a long, lean, black-bearded gardener in turning the corners. Flamelets flicker over the black mould ; whilst the side-current is still rich red, the cross streams begin to turn grey ; and when the grim gardener has squirted water over his plot, you find that it is pig-iron he has been making.

In the ruinously-roofed plots behind the squatter refining-furnaces, the iron is run into flat cakes. When the cakes have cooled, a man and a woman—the woman doing the harder work—hook them on to a two-wheeled frame, and haul them out, to be smashed by a hammer so heavy that its two handles, sticking out like horns, have to be wielded by two men.

The chimneys of the puddling forges bristle lower down like bulrushes, with raised covers like black college-caps above them. The puddlers in blue-checked skull-caps and shirts, dirty white trousers, and red shoes, bend down to the white squares in the black furnaces behind the chimneys, and "stir up with a long pole" the glowing mass inside as if they wore asbestos masks. It makes inexperienced eyes smart to look even from a distance at the openings of those burning, fiery furnaces. The puddler is popularly reported to be able to drink "gallons of beer" per diem without getting drunk. You do not wonder at the report when you see him at his work. The beer must go off in perspiration long before it can affect his brain. Presently he hooks out with a pair of giant's sugar-nippers a loaf-like lump of white and red hot iron, poises it on a wheeled ring which a little

boy has ready, and off the little fellow trots with it to the rollers, in iron-roofed sheds, whirring with vertical and horizontal wheels. Beneath the seemingly soft taps of an oscillating beam the loaf is crushed like putty into a long rough twist, and then dragged backwards and forwards between restless, variously grooved rollers, until the white-red crusty mass has become a flat blue bar. You ask a roller what he gets for his twelve hours' "shift." "25s. a week, but the rail-rollers down below can make 40s., and I've to pay my boy 4d. a day." And the puddlers? "Oh, about the same as us now, but they might make 28s. We're all paid by the ton." Does he belong to a union! "No, we was have a union once, but the young man ran away with the money. Yes, indeed, but the new Parliament, I dare say, will make that all right. You'll let me drink your health, sir?"

"Down below," you can see iron manipulated as easily as a cook rolls out her dough, adds one piece to another, cuts it into strips, and twists it into pipes; boys running along with red rails, which make every log of wood they are dragged over flare out in flame, rails that look cold still passing over rollers, rails finishing off under hammer-taps, and rails stacked and littered about like cannon in an arsenal.

Turn to a Gazetteer sixty years old, and under the head of Merthyr Tydfil you read, "It is surrounded with numerous iron forges, at Cynfarfat, Dewlain, Plymouth, and Pen-y-Darsan, and it is supposed that there are forged weekly upwards of 250 tons of iron, with a con-

sumption of as many tons of coal." What now are the statistics of the "forges," whose names, when Welsh, the Gazetteer so comically misspells? About 1,000 tons of coal a-day are consumed at Dowlais, and its score of blast furnaces turn out each some 80 or 100 tons of pig iron per week. Cyfarthfa, the property of those iron Croesususes, the Crawshays, employs 5,000 hands, and Plymouth, once the property of the same family, 4,000. All round about Merthyr, also, to say nothing of Monmouthshire, the furnaces are flaring. Within the memory of not very old inhabitants, Aberdare has sprung up from a still smaller village than Merthyr into a far more civilised-looking town. Its elegant modern churches, its commodious modern houses, contrast far more strikingly than anything of the same kind in Merthyr with its village nucleus—the white-washed old church with one bell in its gable, and coffin-shaped parterres of homely flowers ; the thatched or stone-roofed white and yellow cottages, over whose stepped stone stiles young Evan Evans chases Griffith Griffiths. Walk up the mountain side from Aberdare to the Abernant station on a faintly moonlit night, and you can see a blending of the natural and the artificial picturesque that will pay you for your trouble. Beneath the crescent moon the hills lie dimly interfolded all around. Impish collier boys, loudly larking, and silent grown-up colliers, taking surly stock of the stranger, pass you on their road home from pits that send up their 1,000 tons per diem. On both hands there are works, with their grimly grand jumble of snowy

vapour, belching flame, black buildings blotched with gaslight, pitchy tips illuminated with flickering variegated fires, and beams, and wheels, and chimney-stalks rising with phantom-like lack of anything to stand upon, out of the cross-lighted, surging chaos. As the train runs on to Merthyr, too, you see more works in the valley of the Cynon, burning like Cities of the Plain, and flushing the sky with a pulsing, rosy-brassy glow.

It is a relief in such a world of whirling wheels to feel that Sunday is drawing near. Then, as on other days, the insatiable blast furnaces must be fed by night and day as they have been fed—still roaring out “Give, give,” whilst babies have grown up into men and women, with babies of their own. But the puddlers, and the rollers, and most of the iron-works labourers, and almost all the miners and the colliers, will get a rest. On Saturday afternoon and evening the Merthyr market is a busy Bourse, and the Carmarthenshire women, in their mother Hubbard hats, full-bordered caps, checked shawls and scarlet whistles, who preside over the dairy produce stalls, give a piquantly foreign eye-spice to the scene. There are other hats in the market that have a still droller appearance—black coal-scuttles, without back, or top, or handle, upside down, bound on with a kerchief, and sticking out in front like a duck’s bill. Caps and widows’ caps are sold in the market ; loaves, plum-buns, plum-cakes ; pats of butter, cylinders of butter a foot across, and more than a foot high ; big cheeses, segments of the same, and little cheeses like tea-cakes ; eggs in

baskets, boots and shoes, crockery, sweeties, geese, bacon, vegetables, amongst which the leek figures largely; herrings, red-cheeked apples in barrels lighted with candles; and Welsh music and periodical literature, in the midst of whose double d's and l's *Reynold's News-paper* and the *News of the World* peep out somewhat incongruously. The meat-market is held in an aisle off the main building; the latticed stalls being provided with snug fires, over which the salesmen and saleswomen gossip and take their tea in a very free and easy fashion. Beyond the unusual number of men and hobbydehoys in low-crowned hats and comforters, pea-jackets, and loose, patched, flannel garments, with faces smudged like slaveys', who loaf purposelessly, or lark boisterously about, there is nothing very striking in Merthyr High Street on a Saturday night. Newsboys shout *Telegraph* just as they do in London (but this is a local journal); choirs of sham-shivering beggars chant dismal ditties; boxes of fusees are pushed under your nose in metropolitan style; and an old man never wearies of croaking, "A new almanac, one penny—a pair of strong leather laces, one penny." Later on in the night, however, merry-making miners tramp home four abreast, singing part-songs in very creditable time and harmony.

To see what hold the Establishment had on the miners, I went to the Welsh service in the parish church on Sunday morning. It is named after the martyr Tydfil, who has given her name also to the town—a district church having been erected in modern times near the well at

which the “pagan Saxons” murdered her on account of her Christian faith. St. Tydfil would marvel at the manifold developments into which her countrymen’s Christianity has branched out if she could see her church now. It has a dimly-illuminated clock, but that is the only thing bright about it. It seems to be mouldering away in its green churchyard, as the bibles painted on some of the tombstones are scaling off from the green slabs. The flags are as damp as the bricks of a cellar. When the clergyman goes to the communion-table, he is quite exiled from his sparse congregation. There were between forty and fifty persons present on the morning I attended. The faded organ seemed to be shivering up in the chilly gallery ; and when the thin old clerk, in wig and spectacles and long-skirted coat, took round the pewter-plate, he looked like the last of his race. It was worth while going to church, however, if only to hear the Litany read in Welsh. It was a sea-like piece of music. The animated sermon, also, sounded ever and anon exactly like a chant. It was the odder that the singing proper should have been dismally nasal and out of tune.

In the evening, I went to a well-filled miners’ chapel, and there I heard hearty and harmonious singing ; but the sermon at first did not sound half so spirited as the clergyman’s to his depressingly small congregation. The preacher prosed on without a tone of music in his voice, and his hearers listened in languid silence. The liveliest member of the congregation was a fair-haired little Welsh-woman, in a pinafore and without a bonnet, who was

playing all kinds of pranks upon her mother's knee. (In some of the Welsh chapels, I am told, children are allowed to run about during service.) But presently a sound like a paviour's grunt was heard from one of the pews, and the preacher grew more energetic. It was repeated ; it was echoed ; it culminated in a chorus of heartily approving *ha's!* The preacher then put off all his prose, and throughout the rest of his discourse chanted like the clergyman—a running fire of *ahmeens* punctuating every sentence.

The High Street was thronged with the congregations that poured out from the different places of worship in the evening, and some of the worshippers instantly adjourned to the public-house. I overheard this conversation in a bar. "Was you at chapel?" "No, but I was at Sunday School." "Was you ever at church, John Jones?" "Yes, indeed, but they was give me no book." "They knew you couldn't read." "I can read, yes, sure, but I never go to church again till I was married." "Ah, then you was bound to go."

The most superficial observation proves that an enormous amount of drink must be consumed in Merthyr, and when you make inquiries as to what the iron workers live on, the first answer you always get is "beer." Their consumption of solids is said to be Falstaffian in its comparative proportion. The puddlers and other close familiars of the furnaces, however, are very fond of radishes and all kinds of cooling vegetables. When maddened with drink, the miners fight long and furiously.

They turn out into the street, strip to the waist, and, not content with blinding one another with their sledge-hammer blows, they fasten their teeth in one another's ears and shoulders, and worry the flesh like dogs. Although there are a good many Irishmen in the iron districts, and they are bellicose enough amongst themselves, it is rare for an Irishman and a Welshman to have a stand-up fight. The Irish are said, as a rule, greatly to prefer above to underground employment, and are therefore found more numerously as labourers in the iron works than as miners in the pits.

The noisiest night in Merthyr is what is called *Dydd Llun-dechra'r-mis* or "Monday the beginning of the month." Up to about mid-day on the previous Saturday the men have been working like horses that they may have as much as possible to take on the following Saturday, which is pay-day—a week being needed to calculate the month's work. Having done so, they hold revel, especially on this Monday, and some of them scarcely go back to work during the rest of the week. At all the works there is a "draw" every week, and on the Saturday after pay-day, which is called "big draw," almost as much money is drawn as on pay-day. Most of the works pay once a month, but at Dowlais, owing to the unavoidable complication of accounts in such a huge concern, there are generally three-months pays.

Perhaps the most painful features in the South Welsh mineral districts are the hardness of the work which the girls and women have to perform, and its unsexing

nature. It is strange to see them so merry over it. But if they threw it up, they could only take their choice between farm labour and domestic service, neither of which is very remunerative in Wales.



## II.

### THE CONNAUGHT COTTER.

HERE is a rich outburst of brogue in the carriage for some minutes before the train glides out from Euston Square, and there continues to be a rich flow of it until the train runs into Holyhead—so strongly scented with porcine perfume from the pier that it is difficult to believe that a windy sea still severs us from Ireland. All the occupants of the carriage, except one, are Irish. It is a puzzle at first to guess at the nationality of the tall, yellowly sunburnt man who lolls at his ease in wide-awake, comforter, and P-jacket, and talks in a nasal drawl. But brogue now and then crops out above the drawl, and he soon proclaims himself an Irishman returning to Ireland after a long residence in Australia. His dates and reminiscences make it pretty plain that he was once a rebel, but he is now a thoroughly converted rebel of the d'Arcy M'Gee type. He still cherishes a languidly sentimental love for Ireland, but he has completely lost

his whilom savage hate of England. The porcupine patriot has got rid of his quills, or only keeps an odd one to make a sly prod at what he considers the folly of his countrymen. He talks of Irish rows which he remembers in a tone of amused contempt, as if he were speaking of the antics of antediluvian maniacs. A little stay-at-home Irishman, who sits beside him, is disgusted with the lanky Laodicean, and looks as if he would like to pitch into him, big though he is. Jealous for his country's present reputation for pugnacity, the little man proudly states that bhoys were kilt in Oireland during the late elections.

"More's the pity," superciliously drawls the colonist; "what's the good of such nonsense?"

"But don't ye foight at elections in Australia?"

"Why should we? We govern ourselves there."

"Ah, sure, that makes a differ. I wish we did that same."

"It seems to me that you might now-a-days, if you knew how to set about it; but the colonists are ahead of you in most things. There's the *Times* writes about 'colonial' as if it meant rubbish, and yet you've been obliged to get colonists to manage your business for you. There's Lowe, your Chancellor of the Exchequer—and it was the colonies made him the 'cute coon he is, though he does abuse them so; and there's Childers, your First Lord of the Admiralty—and he's a Melbourne man."

"H-what's thim to me? They're English."

"But they've got to govern Ireland."

"Bad luck to thim—it's the Oirish should do that.  
Ah, man, you've got no landlorruds in Australia."

"But we've squatters, and they'd ride us if they could  
—only we bucked, do ye see? Ah, Australia's the counthry!"

"You seem moighty loyal there—runnin' afther the Prince like a pack of span'el dogs."

"Why shouldn't we be? A man's a man there, and so we can do as we like."

"And yit ye talk about cuttin' the painther?"

"No, we don't now. Colonists know when they are well off. They're a precious sight more loyal than Englishmen, I guess—let alone Irishmen."

The colonist never wearies of cracking up the colonies. When told of the prices of provisions in Ireland, he says that he must slope back to Australia for the sake of "cheapness." Although accustomed to three hearty meals a-day, of beef or mutton, he seems more amused than horrified when he hears that meat has gone up so in Ireland that poor people cannot buy it.

"Why, in my time," he says, "poor people in Ireland never thought about meat, let alone *ating* it!"

Towards nightfall, more Irish are added to our company—two soldiers going home on furlough; one of them is wild with whisky. He unbuttons his jacket, and leaning out of the carriage, howls defiances at large. At last he tries to clamber outside. His countrymen looking upon this simply as a good joke, the solitary Englishman

has to lay hold of him, and is abused like a pickpocket for his pains.

On board the packet also potheen reigns.

One jovial gentleman inauguates his revels with "Come, let's be jocular—ye're a divil—am I roight?" and is constantly ordering half-glasses of whisky for himself and friends, until he is obliged to rush to his berth and order his basin: over which he howls "Holy murther," as if sea-sickness were an evil that he had been picked out from the wide world's population to endure alone.

At North Wall, in the morning, policemen, whom Frederick the Great would have liked to kidnap, "take stock" of every passenger as he walks ashore. The Midland Great Western Railway station is soon reached, and within a few miles of Dublin the train plunges into what seems semi-barbarism to English eyes. The hovels are not half so good as those one sees in the cuts of missionary notices. The roadside towns have a moist, mushroom look. Where trees have been cut down, the unstubbed-up roots dot the ground in mossy boils just as they might in the American backwoods. There are great gaps in the stone walls. Nothing that has once been broken seems ever to have been mended. There is a green carpet of weeds and grass between the rusty siding rails. The engines of the cattle-trains look as unkempt as the malodorous pigs they draw. You see no sign that time is money.

The train, which has for some time been crawling along

not very much faster than the two sleepy, half-laden barges it has passed on the black, reed-patched canal alongside the line, at last comes to a full stop. An official is asked the reason. “H-which?” is his first queer interrogative response. “Sure,” he goes on, when he has convinced himself that his querist is really so abnormally constituted as to be fretting over the delay, “an engine’s run aff at the crassin’, an’ ye wouldn’t run over the poor crathur, would ye?”

In Athlone anti-English feeling ventures to assert itself after dark. A little party of roysterers “roll up” from one of the narrow side lanes sloping to the swollen Shannon, and tramp past the old church tower, *hoo-hooing* as if they wished to wake the dead that sleep beneath the cracked, grimy gravestones—some resting horizontally on pedestals, and others, once upright, leaning back as if they were weary of the sentry they have kept so long in the grassy old yard—and singing a parody on “The Red, White, and Blue,” with a chorus of—

“The Harp and the Shamrock for ever,  
Three cheers for the Shamrock so green.”

“H-what ‘are ye at-t?’” growls a loyalist out of the gloom.

“Hoo-hoo-hoo!” shout the nationalists.

“They wouldn’t be afther singin’ that if the sojers was abroad,” explains another bystander with a grin. But the “sojers” are in the patched old Plantaganet castle that still frowns down on the river from its Connaught

bank, and in the huge grey barracks, pierced for musketry, hard by.

The old narrow bridge with which Sir Philip Sydney's father spanned the Shannon, with its rude figures and inscriptions commemorating the short shrift which Irish rebels found in Queen Elizabeth's time, has vanished. A handsome broad stone structure, ending in an iron swivel bridge on the Connaught side, stretches across the noble river, pouring in flood from blue, yellow-rushed Lough Rea, which gleams like steel inlaid with gold within its green and brown shores, dotted with white cottages, and glistening tearfully beneath the rare brilliance of a bright blue sky.

In Connaught there is some of the grandest—if not the grandest—scenery in the British Isles. It would be hard to beat anywhere the “Kingdom of Connemara”—the “bays of the great sea ;” with its blue, or black, or grey Atlantic billows boiling in against its lofty precipitous cliffs ; its land-locked inlets ; its loughs, now blue and sun-gilt, and now breaking on their shores before the wild wind, like little seas ; its wide litter of “Druidical stones,” and its mountains with mist-wreaths streaking their swelling sides like snow-drifts. It is an interestingly primitive race, too, that dwells in Connemara. The purest Erse is spoken there, and the spinning-wheel is ever humming. The scarlet cloaks that warm up the streaming hill sides are all homespun. All Connaught, however, is not Connemara. It cannot be denied that the railway ride to Galway is very dreary.

The engine shrieks, as if frightened, as it plunges into the Connaught bogs, spreading for miles on either hand. The motion and the rumble of the train change as it rolls along the low embankment raised above the peaty soil. A church tower on a hill can be seen for miles across the dreary waste, like "Boston Stump" at sea. When the sky is clear, the blue distance looks too far off to belong to this world. Let us land at this roadside-station, whose dark-grey masonry looks so smart and substantial in contrast with the moist, mouldering houses, clustered like funguses behind it. A barefooted woman toils along the platform with a big basket, monotonously crying,

"Apples, or'nges—buy a cake, young man?"

"I'll have some apples, mother; I don't like Orange folk at all, at all, the could-hearted divils," answers a merry-eyed young fellow.

Two constables, with bayonets at their sides—set up better than a good many regulars, and looking like members of some swell rifle corps, in their trim dark-green, red-harped uniforms—also patrol the platform, giving a quick glance into each compartment as they stride past the train. Bare-legged boys and girls, young women in red petticoats and dark-blue hooded cloaks, bulged out by the square baskets underneath; old women in black cloaks and smart-ribboned white night-caps, half covered by the checked kerchiefs that also cover their shoulders; old men in sodden tatters that seem to have been stripped off scarecrows, have assem-

bled at the station for the sake of its excitement. Two or three car-drivers, with their whips slung over their shoulders like bows, stand outside the gate. Beggars, male and female, are waiting there, in readiness to pray Heaven to "power blissins" on the giver of a penny, and to grant him "many happy Christmases on the bed of gloory."

As the car rattles down into the little town—almost flinging off its unaccustomed fare at every corner—it passes a wheeled dog-kennel in which an old woman sits knitting, whilst the young woman who wheels her about begs for both. Into the inn, and up to the table at which the traveller is taking his meal, walks a vocalist vagrant, and begs for "a thrifle for the sanger." The priests seem to be almost the only well-dressed people in the place. Their coats look more glossy-black than in England, and, instead of gliding about with downcast or furtively glancing eyes, as if they did not feel quite safe from insult, their Reverences have a thoroughly at-home look which strikes a stranger. The old Father jokes paternally with the ragged throng he threads, and the young Father has a bumptious walk, as if he felt himself master of the situation. The pigs look even more at home : they lounge about as if the world was made for them, making their morning calls wherever an open door takes their fancy, and are gazed at with affectionate admiration by little knots of men, women and children, who stop to scan their points and scratch their sides. "Please the pigs" ceases to sound like a joke in Ireland.

And now let us start on a visit to a typical Connaught cotter. We pass on the road some men who are mending it—men in black high-crowned hats, brass-buttoned frieze dress coats, corduroy breeches, and gaiters, or blue stockings—just the stage Irishman's costume—spooning about the stones with shovels as long in the handle-less hats as hoes ; an old man, similarly dressed, leading a little horse, which drags a little cart (with shafts that stick out half as far behind as in front) laden with a roped pile of turf, covered with straw, and backed with furze ; and a farmer's “bhoy” (of thirty) in a ragged, caped, drab great-coat, buttoned over a ragged shirt, a limpet-shell hat hanging ragged eaves over his unshorn face, and corduroy trousers with a Vandyked fringe of tatters at the bottom of the legs. A roguish-eyed girl comes along singing like a lark, although she bends beneath the weight of the basket of cabbages heaped high above her hooded head. On both hands there are dark bog and stone-littered pasture. Out of the bog, like a female Samuel, rises suddenly an old woman in a black cloak. A bare-legged woman, with a red shawl over her head, stands motionless in the middle of a half-flooded little meadow, staring at the car as if she wondered what could have brought a stranger into that out-of-the-way place.

Along one of the ditch-like bog lanes—its mud as damp and dark as blacking—a donkey is trudging with panniers full of turf. In front dances a carrot-headed little boy, brandishing his blackthorn in vivid anticipation of coming faction-fights ; his mother follows, smiling mild

approval on her vivacious son ; and behind her, like a filly at foot, trots the little daughter, with her pretty little face peeping out from the petticoat she has thrown over her head like a moss-rose from its hood. Another lane is utterly impassable, and bare-legged youngsters are stalking along the brink of its bank like a file of cranes.

Our cotter's cot stands on a grassy, stony knoll that sinks into the bog. A hay crop might be mown off its thatch, and blotches of green slime dankly stain its white walls. Its single, dim little window somehow suggests a one-eyed pig. The lower-pitched outhouse alongside looks quite as humanly inhabitable. Hens cluck, cocks crow in both ; geese waddle into the house as well as the outhouse, and after them saunters in the pig, rubbing his shoulder against the doorpost. Turf is piled against one end of the house, and stacked in front. In a tiny little yard, with a tumble-down wall, three or four cylindrical little ricks lean drunkenly, all at different angles. A little way off, a plumper one, with a pole sticking out of its apex, stands beside another broken-down wall, within which two cows are running at the donkey that has encroached upon their feed, whilst the goat gravely watches them from the outcropping block on which she has sought refuge. The few sheep are nibbling in a little meadow, still thickly littered with big stones, although a good many have been heaped in cairns—on which rooks are perched with their heads on one side, as if they were wondering how the sheep can thrive so well on their pebble-peppered fare. One little ploughed croft looks

like smashed pavement. Another is half-drowned, and sea-gulls are circling and screaming over the waves that the wild wind, rushing in from the Atlantic, rolls against the shores of the little lough. Out of the bog a black patch, that seems to have no road to it, has been cleared ; and elsewhere rows of as apparently inaccessible cabbages, with splashes of gold and crimson on their crinkled leaves, line the sombre waste of sooty green. All round about there is a jumble of furze, still blooming in December ; fragments of tumble-down iron-grey and piebald wall, spotted with orange lichens, which begin and end in the most capricious fashion ; gate-posts without gates ; and hedgebanks without hedges, which bulge out of the ground like festered scratches. Not far off, there are two ruined cottages, with ivy growing in bushy clumps upon the gables. A still inhabited hovel clings to one of them, as its inhabitants cling to the memory of the departed members of the friendly little colony. That and others in Connaught are less home-like looking homes even than our typical cotter's. Some are of white-washed mud, with the mud showing through the whitewash in streaks and freckles ; some are of brown mud, pure and simple ; a few are of unmortared stone, windowless, chimneyless, with nothing but a bank of earth for their back wall—far less cosy “homes” than the queer little huts one sees perched on the sides of railway embankments in England.

Looking out over the ineffably dreary bog—palled with unhealthy vegetation of the colour of a rifleman's worn-out uniform, tussocked with rusty rushes and

jaundiced grass, blotted with turf-stacks like smoke-grimed chimney-stacks and wigwams, lined with dismal dykes flowing sluggishly between weeping banks of wet snuff and clotted ink—our typical cotter's home may seem a dismal residence; but it does not seem so to him. His dread is that he may be deprived of it—however he may complain, as we shall see he does, of the hard fight he has to make for a living on his little farm. Members of four generations of his family are dwelling on it now. He is an old man, but his mother sits within the cabin—the shrivelled old woman, huddled up nose and knees in a faded red cloak, gazing dreamily from her low stool at the meal-like ash of the fragrant turf-fire. The pretty, chubby, dirty little puss, with a crop of curls matted like a marsh colt's mane, who makes a settee of her bare heels, as she looks upon the old woman's face, in hope of another fairy or Rebellion story, is one of the old woman's great grandchildren. The good-looking young woman, hanging out clothes to dry—beneath that ever-weeping sky—on bushes only a little darker and more ragged, and parenthetically washing her well-turned ankles in muddy puddles, is the wife of one of the old woman's grandsons.

An inventory might soon be made of the cabin's furniture. The "carpet-pattern" is a muddy maze of footmarks, more or less moist—human, porcine, anserine, gallinaceous. From a dark loft above, a rough ladder descends into the common room of the cabin—just as if it were a lighter's cabin. It holds a big black pot, one or two little red-stained chairs, some tubs and baskets, and a

low, lame little table against the wall, with its flap hanging from one hinge like a broken wing, and its top sparsely dotted with cracked crockery. There is no lack of courtesy, however, in the cot. The cotter,—clad in fustian, and looking far more like a jobbing gardener in very poor practice than like a farmer, however small, according to English notions,—at first glances suspiciously at his questioner, but, after a while, when pipes have been lighted on both sides, he chats away freely enough, and seems glad, indeed, to be able to give *his* view of the Irish Land Question.

"Yis, sir-r," he says, "my howldin' is small, but there's smaller. From four to forty acres is how the farrums run about here. Grass farrums—gentlemen's farrums—run up to one hundred and fifty acres. The man who farrums eight acres down to two, might as well be in the work-house. From tin to forty, he can do at prisen prices, if he has a bit of money. With a larruge family, a small farrumer can't do at all at all. Is it altherations ye're spakin' of? Sure I'm an ould man, an' have seen altherations, but none for the betther of ould Ireland—divil a bit. There's poor-rates, 4s. 9d. in the pound, and county cess, 2s., paid half-yearly. The poor man has to pay what the gentlemen plaise—for roads, and dykes, and gas, if he's within two miles of it. The Grand Jury lays on h-what it likes, do you see, and the gentlemen get their private improvements done that way for nothing; the poor man has to pay for them. Thim that pays the cess should have a voice in levying it. Do I think the

Encumbered Estates Act has done good? No, sir-r, I think it has done a power of harrum to the country. If the ould landlorruds was bad, the new ones is worse."

"But haven't they brought money into the country?"

"H-what's the good of that, if they won't let a man live? I'll show ye h-what I mane. A man was getting on under his ould landlorrud, and had improved his farrum. The estate is sould, and a merchant, or something like that, buys it. He has it revalued, and the farrumer's rint is raised just because of his own improvements, and if he can't pay, out he goes, without a penny, of the money he has put into his farrum. There's no denyin' that Ireland is ill-thrated. All the money goes out, and none comes in. H-what countryman are ye sir-r?"

"An Englishman."

"Are ye now? But ye won't be insulted. We've a dale of dodgin' among ourselves, but we niver insult a stranger. It's the truth I'm tellin' ye, sir-r. The landlorruds won't give a poor man lave to live. Rint or land—that's h-what they want. He mustn't sub-let or sow the second crop."

"Do you ever get a reduction of rent in bad times?"

"Reduction of rint! Civil a bit. Pay or go—however cowld the wind may blow. They want the land for their sheep and their bulls—the poor man may go to the poor-house. And h-when he can pay his rint, they want to get him out."

"But hasn't a landlord a right to do as he likes with his own land?"

"Not at all. It's bad enough that we should have to pay rint to thim that look down on us—the land was meant for them that are born on it. But so long as a man pays his rint, no landlorrud has a right to turn him out."

"Were the tenants evicted from those cottages with the roofs off?"

"No sir-r. Connaught is the quietest part of Ireland. They couldn't live here—all gone, some to England and some to America. God feed them if they didn't go—they'd ate one another, blood and bones."

"Do your landlords help their tenants to emigrate?"

"A few good landlorruds out by Dublin may, but that's not the fashion here. *They* help a man to emigrate! It's American money, not Irish, has got the Irish out. My son is in America two years, and he has sent me £24. I've twelve broders and broders-in-law in America. One brings out another, and then they two bring out two more; that's the way it's done. The owldest man would go if he could, and if he came home, he'd want to go back that day nixt week. I've seen owl men, stooped with age, go back."

"Where do most of the emigrants go from?"

"County Mayo, sir-r. Mayo's the poorest county in Ireland, and Galway's next—there's good land in Roscommon. Spring and autumn is the great emigrating times. We put the pertaties in, do ye see, in April, and dig them in October, and thim's the times when most of

the emigrants go. Yis, we go over to England to harvest. How would we live without it? The few pounds we get helps to pay the rint. Men and women, too. Our women can rape, and sow, and cut turf as well as the men."

"What are the wages about here?"

"There's bhoys, sir-r, workin' for 6d. a-day, without food. A shilling a-day, or 5s. a week certain, is the most they make in winter. If they're hired by the day, do ye see, they may lose half a day through bad weather; 1s. 6d. a-day is the wages in spring time and harvest. A bhoy that is fed and lodged at the farrum gets £6 a-year. Is it meself ye want to hear about? My howldin' is tin acres, at a pound an acre. Land, half waste, fetches 30s. an acre sometimes. The tinant has to buy iverything, and do iverything he wants. I've not laid out money on improvements—h-why would I? I might be turned out without a penny for h-what I done. Threescore leases—that's h-what we want; so that a father may be sure that his son will have the farrum after him. No, my land can't grow h-whait—yis, oats. Stock? I've two cows and sivin sheep—yis, and a goat, and a bit of a donkey to carry turf, and a little poulthry. They help the pig to pay the rint. I've as purty a pig as ever you seen. Horses? How could I kape thim, and h-what work would I have for thim? We pay bhoys that kape horses to plough for us. H-what do we ate? We're glad if we can get enough pertaties. No, I make no butther—only a big man can do that."

"At any rate, you are well off for schools in Ireland?"

"Yis, sir-r, the schoolin' is good and chape. The priests and the nuns is very good for that, and the national schools is good. We should be all ignorant if it wasn't for the schools, and we're fond of larnin'."

"They use your national school books in the Australian schools."

"And in the same language, sir-r? Is it now? Well, well."

About Roscommon, houses, arable, and pasture, have a neat English look, and sheep may be seen munching turnips in the dark-brown fields in English style. Let us supplement what our Galway cotter has told us by information derived from a dweller in this more favoured district.

"Sixpence a day! No, sir-r, the bhoys here get better wages than that. Thim that are fed at the farrums get £8 or £9 a year."

"How are they fed?"

"They've pertaties, and butther, and eggs, and mate once or twice a week.\* They will be fed well, because they know there's plinty of masters wanthin' them. A servant girl gets 30s. or £2 a quarther now, and asks for her tay. If her mistress had drunk tay thirty years ago, she'd have been called a robber and an outlaw. There's a great change in the way that people dress, too. Thirty

\* In the west of Ireland in 1868 mutton was 4d., beef 6d. a pound : a good-sized goose sold for 2s.

years ago a farrumer's daughter went to mass in a home-spun cloak ; now she goes in a fine bonnet and skirruts like a balloon. That's how it is the farrumers have no money—it costs so much to clothe the childher."

" What would satisfy the small farmers here ? I mean about the land."

" Well, sir-r, they'd be contint with a thirty years' lease, and to give an average rint of 30s. an acre,—the tinant, do ye see, appointing his valuer as well as the land-lorrud, and no arbithrary eviction. A man should be safe in his howldin', so long as he pays his rint. That's h-what will satisfy us, and we shan't be contint with less."

" I suppose you don't take much interest in the Church Question ? "

" Faith, Mr. Gladstone's a tunderin' nice fellow—the most popular English statesman that iver was in Ireland. But it's the land we care for. We're waitin' to see h-what he'll do about that. Bright won't stay in the Cabinet, I'm thinking, if there's any paltherin'. Ireland was never quieter than it is now. We're waitin' to see if Mr. Gladstone will kape his promises. I mane h-whether we shall get justice about the land, h-when the Church business is settled."

" On what terms are the Conn-aught tenant farmers with the clergy ? "

" Sure, an Irishman would die for his priest. Och, is it the Protestant clargy ye're manin' ? The cowldest concaivable—though there's kind gintlemen amongst

them, h-when they have the manes. Some of the livings is very poor."

"What do Connaught Catholics think of the Protestant missions in the west?"

"The soupers, ye mane. Soup an' thracts!—they flung 'em about as if they was plucking gaise. Irishmen can't be got to lave howld of the owld faith that way. Faith, it's dispicable, sir-r-r. Thim as went over did it in the bad times, but they were Catholics in their harruts all the h-while, and the priest knew it. The soup was the only Prothestantism they swallowed. They did it just for the relief, poor sowls, and small blame to them, for they were starving."

Railway travelling in Ireland reminds one of children playing at trains—it is so free and easy in its time-keeping. The rooks do not fly from the fences when the train lumbers past, but watch it quizzingly, as if they looked upon it as a joke. At a Connaught station our train pulls up for just about an hour. When the guard of the train that has delayed us quietly explains that the wrong staff was given him at the last station (the line is single), the excuse is accepted as perfectly satisfactory by those that have been detained. Whilst they wait they show no signs of impatience. A few look out of the windows now and then to see whether "she" is coming : a few get out and stretch their legs upon the platform ; but most go on chatting in their carriages as merrily as if they were travelling a mile a minute. The robust Rufus who drives the engine descends from it,

and gambols about the platform like a bottle-nosed whale. He lays hands on a little boy and girl who have come to see their friends off, and threatens to carry them to "Dublun" in the fire-box. He rolls up to the stranger with a familiar " Ah, how are ye? Not know me? Well, then, ye ought to—give us your hand, man." The ecclesiastic of some kind, however, who is warming himself by walking as if for a wager from one end of the station to the other—his thin face, shaven as close as an actor's, cleaving the keen air like a steam-boat's cut-water—seems a more profitable chance acquaintance to cultivate. In spite of his pinched face, he looks good-tempered. He has just stopped in his walk to chuck a penny to a beggar, who has lifted her head, hooded with her ragged gown-skirt, above the station-wall; and, *apropos* of that, one can venture to intrude upon his reverence's meditations.

"What a sad number of beggars you seem to have in Ireland!"

"Ah, it's a poor country is Ireland, for them that aren't beggars," he answers with a keenly roguish smile.

"Some people seem to make a good thing out of it, according to all accounts."

"That's thrue, but there's Prothestant curates that hardly know how to live. All they get is from the rector—they get nothing from the people.

"*That* all goes to your Church?"

"Because it's *their* Church, do ye see? We're the old faith, and we belong to them."

"I suppose you wouldn't accept Government endowment?"

"Faith, the Bishops have settled that."

"And a charter for your University?"

"That's safe—all our members are pledged to't."

"But Mr. Gladstone hasn't promised that."

"H-whether or not, we believe in him. He'll do justice to Ireland."

"Don't you think England has been trying to do that lately?"

"Small thanks to her—she's been forced. Stirring up revolution everywhere else, and ruling Ireland as she did! All the Continent and America has been cryin' out shame upon her, and because she isn't so big as she used to be, she's giving us a bit of our rights."

"Is that the feeling of the people as well as the priests?"

"It is, faith. We belong to them, I tell ye, and we can speak their feelings."

"And what are their feelings about the land?"

"I'll lave ye to ask them."

"Well, what do you think will be the effect of disestablishment?"

"Effect is it? The Prothestants will come over in dozens. There's some of their clargy would come now, if it wasn't for the State pay they're gettin'."

"But the Maynooth Grant must go too."

"Let it, and the Regium Donum on the back of it."

"You don't seem much afraid of Clifden and Achill?"

"Afraid ! Have ye read Father Lavelle's letters?"

"You were talking about Protestant clergymen wanting to come over—have you got any Ritualists about here?"

"Not here, but I've read about them. It's plain that the Prothestants can't find rest for the sole of their foot. They're flutherin' about the old Church, wanthin' to be taken in. Prothestantism would be a fine aisý religion if there was only this worruld, but they're findin' out that it won't do for the next. Catholics think a deal more than Prothestants about the next worruld."

"Well, but about this world—has Catholicism done much for Connaught?"

"And h-where will ye find a more moral people? H-when they hear of the way your women live in your English towns, and countrhy too, they think ye worse than heathen."

"And is that because they are Catholics?"

"H-what else would it be? They learn when they're young to mind their priest and come to confession, and that saves them from making beasts of themselves."

"But why won't you let Protestant and Catholic children learn to spell together?" the priest is asked, after a very amicable, though flatly anti-pathetic chat on things in general.

"Because, I tell ye," he replies, "we think more of religion than the Prothestants. This worruld is only a preparation for another, and ye can't get your faith by taking

a mouthful now and then, as if ye were ashamed of it. Secular and religious—ye can't separate the teaching. Ye've seen the fine college they've got at Galway? Well, they can't teach histhory or moral philosophy there—and, I ask ye, is *that* education?"

"She" arrives just in time to obviate the necessity for a reply. When the train starts again, the third-class passengers have got on the subject of Government purchase of the Irish railways. The project meets with unanimous approval. It will "bring money into the countrhy," and it will enable the poor man to "travel chape." A halfpenny a mile is the desiderated fare.

Galway fisher men are not, strictly speaking, Connaught cotters, but, in order to give a glimpse of a curious cluster of Connaught cots, the term may be stretched to include those farmers of the sea. On the shore of grey Galway Bay—a sandy shore littered with dark stones draped with dark sea-weed—stands the Claddagh, or fisherman's colony. Some of the rudest specimens of Connaught cots are huddled together there in little lanes and cross-lanes, and dropped singly or by twos and threes upon the strand. Moss and grass and weeds grow rankly on the sodden thatch, but a good many of the hovels have no roofs. Smoke-blackened fire-places, in which no fire will ever again be kindled, yawn dismally beneath the gaunt, dark, rafterless gables. The doorless doorways and windowless window-holes are partially blocked up with stones, in whose crannies mope draggle-tailed fowls.

Some of the still roofed huts have no tenants ; their shutters (when they have shutters) are kept to with stones. Here and there a canvas-swathed boat's mast rots upon the ground, or a boat lies bottom upwards, and patched with tarnished tin. In front of one of the cottages a stump four-post bedstead is put out in the rain, as if in ostentatious proof that the colony possesses such a piece of furniture. Dwarf yellow candles, that seem made of cheese, dangle in the tiny "shop" window ; a wisp of straw and a sod of turf dangle outside against the door-post. A few women, with their baskets at their backs, are starting for the town, where they will wander in and out of the shops, wailing their sad "Want any herrin'?" beneath the crumbling shields that still emboss the green-grey walls of old Spanish-built houses. A few others are washing clothes in the sea, and wringing them out on the soppy sand. Dispirited men, many of whom have pawned their tackle, stand in knots under the lee of the cottages, looking in moody silence at their boats rocking idle on the tide. The trawlers, they say, catch all the fish in the bay, and kill the rest, except what they drive away. The Claddagh was an important place once, with its "king," who selected lucky days for his subjects to go out fishing on ; but famine, fever, and emigration have sadly thinned its population. It still, however, proudly boasts that an illegitimate child was never born within its precincts.

In family affection and feminine chastity, poor Ireland can challenge the wide world to equal her.



### III.

#### THE STAFFORDSHIRE POTTER.

N one side of a tunnel there are green meadows, hedges, and hedge-row trees, spreading clear, and quiet, and lonely ; on the other, the train rushes out into light dimmed by the omnipresent smoke of the crowded Potteries—a series of dingy towns and most unrural villages that run into one another, and sprawl for miles along the bottom and up the sides of what was once (as its outlying portions, and grassy, timbered oases in its murky midst are left to prove) a picturesquely verdant valley. Longton, Stoke, Hanley, Eturia, Burslem, Longport, &c., have coalesced or are coalescing like the cities and towns and hamlets that make up what we call “London.”

Traversing the district by rail at night, when misty darkness blots from view the portions still unbuilt upon—stopping at the frequent stations, whose names, shouted in Staffordshire vernacular, are unrecognisable without a reference to *Bradshaw*—the inexperienced traveller feels

himself to be momentarily getting more and more hopelessly bewildered in a Babylon of crockery. Always on one hand, sometimes on both hands, there is a far-reaching jumble of buildings dotted with long lines and confused constellations of dim gaslights. Towering chimney-stalks and corpulent kiln-cones loom through the gloom north, south, east, and west. Every now and then a glimpse is caught of the spectral black wheels gibbeted above the mouth of a coal-pit ; or the lambent flames of a row of iron-furnaces luridly light up the dark gallery that connects the blazing forts. The district is not less bewildering to wander through by day. But there is no mistaking the big, handsome Stoke station, the central one of the North Staffordshire line, with its red brick Tudor arcades, paved with encaustic tiles (dimmed by muddy clogs), looking over at the still handsomer great red brick railway hotel, with a statue of Josiah Wedgwood in the middle of the wide space between the two rich-looking Elizabethan buildings. Everywhere you hear a clatter of clogs on footpaths paved with bricks—some plain, some diced, some figured like a chimney-sweeper's smutty ten-of-diamonds—placed lengthwise at the borders of the path, crossed in a matting pattern in the middle, and fringed with a border like a cog-wheel beaten straight. Black clogs with gilt soles are a frequently recurrent sign ; large square sign-boards hang over the road as they do in Hogarth's pictures ; sometimes, instead of the mere emblazoned name of the thing that gives the hostelry its title, a full-sized model of the same is slung over the

doorway. Public-houses are plentiful as blackberries, in which lounging imbibers pour Burton ale, drawn in earthenware jugs, into slim glasses like champagne glasses, with tiny hop-leaves and such like ground upon their lips. Meeting-houses as well as public-houses are plentiful in the Potteries—big meeting-houses, like old-fashioned inns or town-halls, in broad thoroughfares, and queer little conventicles, like Silas Marner's, in queer little corners. Some of the little ones are Welsh. Weighing-machines squarely blotch the roadways, rails are ruled rectilinearly along them, or flourished curvilinearly about them. The stranger hails as a guiding-star the yellow tram-car—like a crammed Noah's ark on wheels—when he comes upon it, toiling up a hill behind its unicorn team, or rumbling down a hill with break-locked wheels. Donkeys, with unpainted milk-cans, like magnified tea-canisters, swung pannier-fashion over their black pads, amble by; milkmen bearing green milk-cans in their hands, milkwomen dragging green milk-cans mounted on wheels trudge along. Coal-carts, red, black, and blue, everywhere grind through the mud, or jolt over the frozen ruts. Some of the potteries consume a thousand tons each a week. Canals, with long narrow barges floating on their peasoupy water, and Burton-ale-drinking bargees indulging in the broad chaff which used to raise the spirits of the melancholy-anatomizing namesake of the beer, run right alongside the potteries, and litter their wharfs—scored with narrow tramways and tiny turn-tables—with Cornish clay, coals, bones, and flint.

Everywhere there are potteries. The air is thick with smoke, as if "all the world and his wife" had got their chimneys on fire. A cloacinal odour, like that of Bromley and Bow Common, at times overpowers the comparatively wholesome scent of soot. The sparrows are blacker even than in London. The cows and donkeys grazing in the rough waste land, here and there interspersed between the houses, are dusty as a door-mat. Green can scarcely be called the dominant hue of the pastures in which they lie down, melancholy-musing. These "meadows" are fenced with broken rail, ragged, fragmentary hedge, black rope, and jumbles of brick, tile, stone, and slag. Horrible pits of miry clay yawn in them, with almost perpendicular tramways reaching from the dull-brown brink to the yellow-green pool of water at the bottom. Ponds of hot water steam in them; heaps of hot rubbish smoke in them. They are littered with mounds of smashed crockery, and cracked "saggars," piled one upon another like mildewed cheeses. In other places, the lumpy waste is lined with a road, whose fresh kerb-stones show that another link of building is soon to be welded into the dingy Potteries' chain. In others, squat domed kilns are dropped, like black Arab tents upon the desert; protected from intrusion only by the board, nailed to a high pole, which announces, "No admittance to these works, except on business."

On all sides of the waste ground, little streets pull up abruptly, as if deterred from going further by its dreariness. Some of the older of the small houses in the

Potteries are miserable enough ; but, generally speaking, the potters seem to be substantially housed. The outside brick often has the faintly-blushing negro tint that red-brick houses have in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green ; but the floors, paved with red and black tiles, in a magnified Rob Roy pattern, the classical red-on-black flower-pots, the abundance of chimney ornaments (sometimes including covetable little Parian busts), and the white porcelain number-plates upon the doors make the potters' cottages look neat and cosy, in spite of one's invincible impression that they are being cured like hams in the smoke, which gives a foggy look to the Potteries, even on the brightest day. There are plenty of good-looking houses of a superior class in the Potteries ; modern villas, and old-fashioned square blocks of brick, with stone facings and stone globes on the piers of the tall iron gates—and sometimes ivy-draped—like those which abound in Hampstead, and Highgate, and Clapton.

For some ten miles the pottery towns and suburbs stretch and straggle along continuously. The whole district bristles with kilns, showing above barrack-like dead walls, and many-windowed barrack-like ranges of buildings. The two or three storied central portion of the "bank" sometimes has a carved quartered shield above its great gates ; sometimes it is heavily old-fashioned ; sometimes it is built of modern, ornamented, streaky-bacon brick ; but everywhere a plethora of china and earthenware shows through its many windows. Some of the kilns are like little pyramids, some like big bellows

minus a nozzle, some like water monkeys, some like high-shouldered case bottles ; some are ringed with bulging rims ; some are varicosely veined with capriciously diverging cracks ; some are castellated ; some are pierced at the top as if for musketry ; some push out their plump proportions at the angle between two flat walls, like the corner towers of castles. Gallows-like black beams and cranes, with great chains dangling from them, protrude from the "banks." When the great gates are opened, you see a court-yard littered with straw and choked with crates. It is in these huge concerns that the typical industry of the Staffordshire Potteries is carried on. The rough ware, popularly known as "Staffordshire," made with no aid from moulds and steam machinery, is, I was told, almost extinct *in* Staffordshire.

It is easy to obtain admission to one of these great "banks." A more courteous set of people than the Staffordshire people, of all the classes I encountered, I never came across. Wherever I applied for admission I instantly got it, but I would particularly mention the courteous manner in which I was treated at the works of the Messrs. Davenport, of Longport, Liverpool, and London ; a gentleman connected with the firm consenting at considerable inconvenience—

"Partem solido demere de die—"

to give up to me the busiest hours of the business day, in order that I might obtain intelligent guidance over their great factory

The pottery manufacturers are as proud of their show-rooms as a young wife is of her drawing-room ; and the feeling extends to those who have no interest in the show beyond that which springs from living in its neighbourhood. When I was going up to the Messrs. Copeland's beautiful showroom at Stoke, a police-sergeant, who was chatting with the porter in the lodge, anxiously informed me that I must be sure to see Minton's when I had seen that, because they had "the foinest showroom hin hall Hurup." The showroom, accordingly, is the first place to which the stranger is conducted in the Potteries. It is a sight of which its owners—and still more its makers—may well be proud. In a long room like a picture gallery, lighted by day through its many windows, and by night with prismatic, many-dropped glass gasaliers, the choicest products of the potter's art are exhibited ; on the long tables that stretch along the middle of the room, on side tables, on shelves, and in recesses on the floor. Vistas of vases, colonnades of dwarf pillars, breakfast and dinner and dessert services, whose snowy purity, and rich gilding, and blue and blushing flowers, it seems profanity to think of obscuring with coffee, gravy, or even fruit juice ; basins and ewers that only water-nymphs seem fit to use ; delicately-flowered porcelain panels and finger-plates and tables ; quaintly gorgeous vessels of majolica ; Parian Graces ; Santa Filomenas, with lamps ; Beatrices with stars upon their brows ; listening Egerias, holding back their tresses ; it is the apotheosis of alumina—a congregation of ground clay made perfect.

It is difficult to believe that things so soft and pure can have been produced from such coarse stuff and in so rough a place, when you descend from the showroom and wander through the works, littered with the raw material of the "slip." The buildings make you think of a very dirty Inn of Court. There is no symmetry, and there seems to be no system in them. They are of dark brick, with the outside staircases of stone, and the inside staircases of wood. The work-rooms, however, in schoolboy phrase, are "jolly warm." One dark room—in which a pale-faced man, technically called the "looker to the ware," is turning basins ranged on racks—seems hotter than the Kew tropical aquarium. The pale-faced man's wages are  $6\frac{1}{2}$ d. to every shilling earned by the maker of the ware. Out in the yard, here is a heap of Cornish china clay, like lumpy whity-brown sugar, and there a little Arabia Petræa of flints waiting to be calcined, and beyond a valley of dry bones. On an upper floor square axles are revolving, horizontal cogged wheels grinding round and round, and vertical axles, with broad, heavy-weighted arms, are crushing to pulp some of the materials of the "slip," in headless white drums. You ask the white-splashed man in charge why those great stones are placed upon the arms. "Ho, ho," he says, "ah couldn't groind wi'out un ;" and then, as if to make up for having laughed at your ignorance, he takes off some rough wooden lids and shows you little tanks of beautiful pink and green and blue ; for the colours are ground here also, at a saving to the manufacturer, on colourman's price, of

4d. in the pound. In a dusty cave below, what looks like a dislocated portcullis thumps down its bars one after another in an opening in the wall ; that, too, is crushing for the "slip." Against the walls of this long store, clay is stacked in square blocks, like unbaked loaves of "seconds" flour that have not risen. Clay, you are told, improves, like wine, through being kept. You are invited, also, to notice the difference in quality between the blocks. As the realm has its four estates, so clay has its four "bodies." In the middle of the store stands a pug-mill. The clay-stained miller presses on an iron lever protruding from the floor, and the knife-armed shaft begins to revolve in the iron-bound cylinder, slicing and kneading up the lumpy clay until it is forced out at the bottom in a putty-like mass, which the miller cuts into loaves with one swift down-stroke of a wire held between his hands. If his department makes you think of an Otomac bakehouse, the room in which the slip is mixed makes you think of an Otomac dairy. There are vats on both sides. In some, graduated with knobs, gaunt dairymen, in white-splashed loose flannel coats and coarse aprons, are blending into what looks like thick milk the liquefied blue clay, Cornish clay, calcined flint, and granite, together with the "stain" (mineral oxide that gives the ware its tint) ; each so many ounces to the pint. In china slip calcined bones take the place of the so-called blue clay. Over other vats similar dairymen are straining their milk through very fine sieves, called "lawns," which they pull and push backwards and forwards along boards

which bridge the vats: 18s. a-week is the slip-maker's remuneration. The earthenware slip is dried into paste in shallow, oblong tanks, paved with square quarries. There is a fire at one end, and flues run along the sides: the heat filling the chamber with a wash-house-like vapour. There is no vapour over the tanks in which the china slip is dried, these being cased with plaster of Paris, which rapidly absorbs the moisture. Above the level surface of the drying paste rise flaky hummocks, making the tank look like a miniature frozen sea. Before the china slip can get into the tank, it has to run the gauntlet through serried ranks of magnets, planted in the trough through which it flows, to catch any iron it may hold.

And now let us see the pasty clay moulded into form. The venerable, hand-turned potter's wheel still revolves in Staffordshire; and though the use of moulds may turn out more uniform sets of ware, the sharpness of eye and the skill of hand which it requires make the "thrower's" work, independently of its historical associations, one of the most interesting of pottery operations. The thrower has two feminine familiars in pinnafores, although they are women middle-aged and young; one turns his wheel, and the other hands the thrower his clay and places his completed vessels on the shelf: each receiving 4d. to every shilling which he earns. The girls, who merrily bob up and down, with arms a-kimbo, on the treadles of the potter's lathes, are paid in the same proportion. Round spins the thrower's disc, and, glancing now and then at

the little bar protruding from his table for a gauge, the potter moulds the whirling clay into a great elongated acorn. Up and down it goes, like a snail's horn. Presently one hand dips into the mass, then both are deftly pressing out its sides, and soon, as if by magic, the amorphous lump has become a shapely bowl. You are told that the thrower's trade is very injurious to his health, owing to the cramped position which he has to keep for so many hours as he stoops over his work. From six to six in summer—nominally from seven to seven, but generally to six in winter—with intervals for meals, are the working hours in the Potteries.

The thrower who overhears the remark is a light-bearded, ruddy young fellow, as broad across the shoulders as Tom Sayers. He grins merrily at the notion of *his* being made out to be an invalid, but adds, "Ah reckon theer een't many so thick-set as ah ham." It is the pallor, rather than the smallness, of the men employed in the Potteries, however, that strikes a stranger. There are plenty of big fellows amongst them, but almost all have a tallow-candle complexion. A good many of the women, on the other hand, preserve the rosy, buxom comeliness which seems to be a very common characteristic of their sex in Staffordshire. The dark-haired young woman who is turning our thrower's wheel is ruddily handsome, and looks as strong as a horse. She, too, gives a broad grin with her black eyes and white teeth when she overhears a jesting remark that "ballers and turners" get so plethorically wealthy, when they behave themselves properly, and the throwers

with whom they work are not lazy scamps, that they are obliged to keep husbands in order to get rid of their superfluous riches.

It is by the score of dozens that the throwers, &c., are paid. The greatest part of Staffordshire earthenware and china is made in or on moulds by "flat-pressing" and "hollow-ware dressing." A plaster-of-Paris cast is placed on a disc which a handle-turning "jigger-boy" causes to revolve; a short-cake of clay is dabbed down on or fitted into that; and then, by hand, and pressing-tools, and knife, which slices off superfluous clay like strips of dough, the presser makes his vessel. Vessels of complex construction, of course, require many moulds; the different parts being articulated while the clay is still moist. The jigger-boys are paid by the pressers, and make from 5s. to 8s. a-week.

You ask a flat-presser, who is making plates, what he earns a week. He gives you a sly, sidelong glance, which plainly says, "What's that to you?" You apologise for having intruded on his private affairs. "It is proivit," he rejoins with a flickering grin. "Ah reckon what ah mek is naught to nawbody 'cept myself. Haverage? Thaht's moor loike. Welly moost on hus meks a poond a wake." I learned from employers that this was a very *low* average. The flat-presser, however, is exceptionally reticent. Most of the men will chat readily enough, and will put themselves to inconvenience in order that you may see something done which they are not doing at the moment. Let us ask this hollow-ware

presser, who is making pie-dishes, very much as a cook makes under pie-crust, what he earns. He says that he can make about twenty-two pieces in the day at 3d. each. His neighbour, who is making soup-tureens, is also pleased when his swift workmanship is admired, but he is still more pleased when a little stranger that hinders him in his work attracts attention. He has got before him a little bird in a cage, which he intends to take home to his children at dinner-time, but which he now keeps on glancing at as proud as any child. He explains that the bird has been taught to draw its own seed and water, but that, as soon as he bought it, he took away the little bucket and chain, because they seemed to weigh on the "bird's moind loike," and kept it from singing. It is refreshing to note the serious interest with which the big fellow and his big fellow-craftsmen discuss the probability of the little bird's recovering its voice under new circumstances.

When the ware has been dried in a stove, it is packed in the hollow-cheese-like "saggars," coarse vessels made of marl, luted with clay to prevent air from getting in. All kinds of things are packed in one saggars, to economise space, but since they would coalesce if they were allowed to touch, they are kept apart by various kinds of clay props. The commonest is the "spur,"—in shape something like the Manx arms. As the points of this often leave three marks on the bottoms of the plates, etc., such ware is now sometimes "cranked"—stacked with intervening clay thimbles at the sides of the piles, so

made and arranged as to disfigure less the articles they separate. A board leads into the open centre of the kiln, through which the heat will come up. When the saggars have been ranged in rings of basaltic columns round these open spaces the door-way is blocked up with bricks and the furnaces are lighted. These are in a pediment that bulges out at the bottom of the great black drum-like kiln, and are so arranged that the fireman can let air into them, or exclude air from them, at pleasure. He "makes his proofs" by taking out bricks at different heights in the blocked-up doorway, and so regulates the heat—a very ticklish operation. "Theer, sir," he says, as we stand outside the kiln in the gloomy cone, whose top looks like the shaft of a tunnel, "luke at thaht." He has taken out a brick from the doorway high up, and a glowing oblong of red emblazons the dingy brown. "And now luke at this," he says, as he takes out a brick nearer the bottom. "It een't nigh so red—it'll be as black as my hat at breakfast-time to-morrow. It's the nature o' heat to hascend." From forty-eight to fifty hours is the average time a kiln is kept alight. In cases of emergency the firing is done in twenty-four hours; but such quick work is very "risky." The minimum pay of a furnace-man is £2 a week. Every potter stamps his work with a mark or number; and when it comes out finally from the kiln, the ware is sorted, and each man, of course, is credited with all of his that has come "good from the furnace." The failures are then scrutinised. If the fireman has spoilt them, the loss falls on the firm; if

the potter's bad workmanship is manifestly to blame, it is he who is mulcted; and if the negligence cannot be traced with certainty, the potter gets half-pay.

When ware has been once fired, it is called "biscuit"—the drying-stove etymologically justifying the use of the "bis." Let us go up into this first-floor room to see the biscuit enamel-printed. An aproned engraver heats a plate upon a stove, he dabs sticky colouring matter on it, he pulls a proof on "flimsy" from his little hand-press. "Coot it hoop, Helizabeth," he says. Elizabeth—a girl of thirteen, with scissors that turn corners as swiftly and as skilfully as a hansom cabman—cuts the pattern for the border of the plate into two ladies' collars; she cuts out the patterns for the centre, and the "opaque china" trade-mark on the bottom, as rapidly; and with equal neat-handedness a young woman in a wash-leather apron applies all to the proper places, rubs the patterns in, dips the plate into water, and brings it out looking, to inexperienced eyes, as if it did not need anything more to be done to it—although this is very far from being the case. The enamel-printer, when complimented on her quickness, responds, with languid satire, "Ah moost do a many to mek oot mah dee's work." "And how much does that come to in the week?" "Oh, we doan't mek moor than ten shilluns; boot the men thaht ken peent mek their twenty-three shilluns, an' moor."

The printed ware is next put into the "hardening on" stove, to have "the oil burnt out of the colour," and then it is carried to be glazed. The glazer is not an old man,

but much stooping over his poison-breathing tub has made him very pale and lean, and literally leaden-eyed. He dips the plate into his tub, swishes it about, and brings it out with a pale-red covering, quite obliterating the pattern. "It's bitty," he remarks, apologetically, pointing to the little lumps that pimple the glaze; "but ah oun'y did it for a mek-shift, to let yer see." Interrogated as to the symptoms of the complaint his lead-inhaling calling causes, the glazer croaks like a raven—"Chronic—rheumatiz—p'isons the system." "It's unhealthy work," you hear in explanation; "but we do the best we can for them. The Factories Act makes us, indeed. We provide them with towels and nail-brushes to clean their hands before they take their meals." "Yes, ah've two tow'l's an' a neel-broosh," echoes the glazer in a comically grateful tone, as if he thought both Government and employers had been exceedingly generous in securing him such luxuries. The earthenware, when it has been glazed, is once more fired, and then carried to the sorting-room, where a bevy of silently smiling lasses sit upon the floor "dressing" the ware—chipping off the kiln-marks with stumpy chisels.

China is coloured and gilded *after* it has been glazed. Here gilders are drawing faultless circles of brown gold as the ware spins round beneath their slender brushes. There, seated at tables that run along the sides of a long room, female burnishers are rubbing up the fired gilding into glowing brightness. This intelligent-looking young fellow in black is painting a dessert-service with flowers.

He takes nature for his model, he says; and his wild-roses justify his speech. He studied at the Stoke School of Design, which now numbers some eighty pupils; and he has just finished a picture for the School of Arts which he modestly hopes may be "lucky." Yonder artists in beards and blouses are making Parian statuettes. One of them is combing out the hair of a head, whose torso trunk and *disjecta membra* lie huddled in a box. A Musidora, just finished for the Crystal Palace, stands upon the table. Another female figure with flying drapery is waiting for the furnace, and presents an odd appearance, supported on all sides with props that are kept from sticking to her by powdered flint. Her modeller points out little holes in the Parian. "Those are for ventilation," he says; "she would blow up in the furnace, if it were not for them." His brother artist places two figures of the same design, a little Cupid and a big Cupid, side by side. They were of the same size originally, he says, but one has, and one has not, passed through the fire. Next he shows you the number of moulds that are needed to make a Parian figure—its parts, which look as if they were carved out of a single block of marble, being really joined together with adroitest skill whilst the material is still damp. That uncooked hasty-pudding-like stuff in the corpulent white jug on the table is liquid Parian—*i.e.*, fine china "slip." He pours some of it into plaster-of-Paris moulds, and in a very short time it has become a semi-solid dog on its hind legs.

A few words as to the potter's social condition. The

Staffordshire Potter of the present day is a very different man from his grandfather, or even his father. He no longer looks upon machinery as a device of the Evil One to deprive human hands of work. He clubs with three or four of his fellows to take in a daily paper, which they read aloud by turns at dinner time. A great many, both of the potters and the potteresses, regularly attend some place of worship on the Sunday, and very "splendacious" often is the attire of the potteresses at service. I do not mean to say that the potters are all church or chapel goers. For some little time before the publics empty on Saturday night, the songs sung inside become uncertain both in time and tune. On Sunday morning, unshaven potters may be seen smoking in their shirt-sleeves over their fires during service time, and, spruced up in monkey-jacket and gay comforter, taking their walks abroad, like young and old ladies of the period, with their canine pets in leash. These pets are critically compared. "Doost think thaht a bad coor?" inquires one potter. "He lukes as if he'd foight," says another. "Ah'd coot his tail if ah'd thaht chep," says a third.

Nevertheless, Sunday in the Potteries, which used to be the fair-day there, is almost as quiet as a Scotch Sabbath. The public-houses are open, to be sure, in the middle and at the end of the day; but I did not hear nearly as much noise in them as at a love feast on which I ventured to intrude. In these sceptical, nothingarian times, it was a curious surprise to listen to the day-of-the month, hour-of-the-day, dates which the honest potters

gave of their "conversion," and the confident manner in which they spoke of their "growth in grace," whilst their brethren joined in a chorus of "Amen, A-men," "Yes, thaht's it," "Glory be to God!" The wording of the various confessions of faith was very piquant. One brother spurned the thought of "blowin' hup the hashes of a hextinguished hexper'ence." A second began "Ah'm happy to se that ah knew ah'm a sinner—preese the Lord!" A third, "Ah ken't mek foin spee-aches loike soom folk." A fourth, when several of his predecessors had dwelt on the inestimable advantage they had derived from being born of pious parents, commenced, somewhat satirically, "Ah ken't se as *ah* wor born o' pious parents, boot ah went to schule wi' Jesus Chroist, an' He teached me hall ah wahnt to knew." (This speaker seemed to consider it rather nambypamby to be born of pious parents, as not giving a man a chance of being religious "under creditable circumstances.") A fifth brother preluded with this enviable dogmatical utterance, "Ah knew mah hown *heart*, an' ah knew mah hown *moind*, an' ah knew whet ah *mane*." So far as the heart was concerned, there could be no doubt as to the genuineness of any of the potter's utterances, and therefore it was a treat to listen to them.

Next day I foregathered with a potter of the old school, and his reminiscences will serve as a foil to the "love feast experiences." A remark on the unexpected quietness of the Potteries unlock the old man's memories. "Th' wouldn't ha' thowt so fifty yare back, nor forty

nayther. Theer wor cockin' an' dog foightin's then. Theer's a cock-pit at Fenton now, ah've heered, boot ah never seed it. Ah'd rayther see a cock-foight than a dog-battle any dee. The dogs welly worry theirselsns to regs, boot the cocks, if they's any spoonk in 'em, soon gets it ower. It moost be a geme cockerel thaht 'ull stahnd the stale. Ah'd one once fowt for an hou-er, an' war hall coot hoop joost as if ye'd carved un. He wor a black-bristed red. A little loomp o' a cock, he wor. Fou-er poond height wor his foightin' weight. Ah bred foive from un, boot they was hall stou'n, hand then ah give ower cockin'. Hif yer keers about cockin', ah'll tellyersoommut that'll seeve yer money. Soom folk says it's hall bosh about the colour o' yer cockerels, boot ah knaws better. Doan't yer never foight a dark cock on a laight dee, nor a laight cock on a dark dee. A dark cock should be fowt on a dark dee, an' a laight cock on a laight dee. An' soom folks says it's hall bosh about charmin' yer cock, boot they're wrong wo-ally. Ah moind, when ah wor a lahd, mah feyther an' another chep backed a cock agin a parson's, for ten poond a soide. Mah feyther wor a teelor, an' t'other chep wor a waver. Yer've heered about t'old witch o' Lane End? Doan't metter—she wor well knawed in these parts; an' mah feyther took a feather o' his cock to t'old witch, an' she charmed un; an' as soon as the cocks wor put down, parson's turns ower, an' wouldn't so mooch as look at t'other. "You've been to t' devil," says parson; "boot ah've got a stronger devil then yourn;" an' he broke t' charm, an' his cock

won arter hall. It wor one o' them wi' a tassel on t' head."

Although he was a cock-fighter, the old man plumed himself on his respectability. In reply to his remark that, though he had "heered mooch talk o' Loonnon," he had never been there, and didn't suppose that he ever should go now, I pointed out the facilities for travel which excursion trains afford. "Hexcoorsion treens!" the old potter cried, with aristocratic disdain. "Ah went hin one o' they, when t' Queen kem to Manchester, boot ah'll never gaw agin—theer's hall soart o' coompany!"



## IV.

### THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LABOURER

**I**KNOW no county which can boast of such a variety of smock-frocks as Bucks : smocks the colour of a cabbage leaf, intricately embroidered on the shoulders, back and breast, and sometimes decorated at the corners of the broad turn-over collars with blue glass buttons ; smocks once green, bleached by the weather almost white ; now and then a blue smock ; and black smocks, for even the coal-carters in Buckinghamshire are smock-frocked. Along the roads and over the meadows the smock wearers slouch into town—some of the old men looking rather droll in spectacles and tall black hats—to move amongst the green marked sheep, the black pigs, and the horses with straw plaited tails in the Market Square, and to twist calves' tails, and to stand at the head of beasts in the cattle market. As a class, the clodhoppers—some patient-eyed, some sullen-eyed—seem a grasshoppery, feeble, shrivelled race, beside the square-shouldered,

succulent farmers. Their average wages are about 10s. a-week, with, in some parts, a shilling extra on Sundays for milking. In exceptional cases, men get as much as 15s. a-week, and such men can afford to eat meat twice a-day. Their wives and children plait and make lace. Neither industry is what it used to be, and the early age at which children are put to these employments injures their prospects. They learn scarcely anything but plaiting and lace making, and cannot take places which would bring in more money, because they do not know how to do even plain sewing.

A good many of the thatched Buckinghamshire cottages look very picturesque, and running right into the towns as they do, they link town and country together in a quaintly piquant fashion ; but if a man has a family, there is small provision for comfort or decency in those brick floored, scantily furnished, often only two-roomed, and generally gardenless hovels, although they do look "bits"—barring the lack of garden—for Birket Foster. A little way off the noble, green-swarded, double avenue of trees, with far stretching roots, showing taut as cables above ground, which sweeps down to ornamented lodges almost inside the town, that gives the owner of Stowe his title, there is a cluster of such cottages. If an artist had his choice, he would, I think, rather paint the cottages than the palatial façade to be seen through the arch at the top of the avenue, in spite of the intervening lawns dotted with fallow deer. But, so far as comfort is concerned, what a marvellous contrast there is between

the Hall of the Duke of Buckingham and the hovel of the Buckinghamshire labourer.

I started to talk with him in his home, and on both sides of the hedges, in golden spring weather, prematurely blooming out between rain and snow in February. On the main line the long train, bound from black, busy London to the black, busy north, puffed and rattled away on the sun-gilt metals, and silence once more brooded over the station. In the leisurely style which characterises even railway management in agricultural districts, the branch train got under way, and rumbled most decorously out of the Hundred of Dacorum into equally rural Bucks. On both sides the flat, greenly flat country spread in sunny peace. Half-a-dozen men, employed in building what looked like a village "cage," knocked off work to watch the train go past. Little lambs galloped away from the line fences on long black legs. A sweep's pony, standing at a level-crossing gate, took fright, turned tail, and scampered down a lonely lane with its soot-sack laden cart, and two black familiars after it. In the train the talk was of old-fashioned seasons come again, promising old-fashioned haymaking in May. The town at which the train stops—in spite of the good-looking new buildings and plate-glass shop-fronts in which it has broken out, in spite of more than one railway-station and a canal wharf, in spite of street-lamps (economically not lighted when the almanack says that it ought to be moon light), and its multitude of signs, hung out like banners, seems almost as sleepy as the country round. It is not

market-day, and a bashful stranger might feel inclined to blush at having to walk alone across the bright, broad, bare market-square, watched as he goes with sleepy curiosity by tradesmen basking at their shop-doors. A quiet, sunny, old-fashioned red street leads up to the green, many-graved churchyard, begirt, in cathedral-close fashion, with quaintly-picturesque old houses, ripe-red and yellowish-white. In the middle of the churchyard rises the fine cruciform church, a land-mark in the fertile Vale of Aylesbury, part of it as fresh-looking as when just finished, and the other part under the tools of workmen who are chipping off the rough plaster which still disfigures its stone, in the leisurely style which seems to be the characteristic (save in sport, volunteering, and duck-hatching) of the latitude. But, if the town is quiet, the country outside it seems—to one who was in London an hour or two before—almost sound asleep ; that is, so far as human life is concerned. Larks are singing by the hundred, in their “ privacy of glorious light ; ” visible, plump, brown thrushes are also singing all around : glossy rooks caw, circle, drop, strut, and then rise in pettish alarm, to drop again, with clerical stateliness, on both hands ; now and then a cow lows, a bullock sulkily soliloquises, a sheep baas like a hoarse *basso*, a lamb bleats plaintively, a sheep-bell rattles its muffled tinkle, or a far-off dog barks and brays ; but a man’s shout across the brown and green fields is so rare, that it sounds startling. The eye wanders over lonely field after lonely field without lighting on a root. Beyond the flat, low

land rise the still lonelier-looking Chiltern Hills, with single trees upon their sky-line, pall-like dark woods sweeping down their sides; and chalky, unwooded, furze-dotted pastures beneath the woods, that make one think of the shorn, tufted lower limbs of poodles. On the highway, the silent road-mender gazes for five minutes after the pedestrian who passes him, or the hip-booted horseman who gallops by, or the taxed cart, to which the fat old lady gives a "list to port," or the half-tilted miller's waggon, slowly drawn by a pair of plump dappled greys, whilst the white-powdered miller's man beguiles the tedium of his journey by pitching fragments of his lunch to the white-and-silver spaniel that is leaping and whining at the cart's-tail. When the waggon has ground out of hearing, there is nothing to remind the road-mender that there is any man besides himself astir in the world, except the sullen thud of the flail, that comes from the long, low, black barn a field off.

Lanes branch from the highway at right-angles, with white finger-posts indicating the distance of the village to which the lanes lead in miles and furlongs. These lanes are even more lonely than the road. In one of them stands a smock-frocked little boy, holding the halter of a rough-coated horse that lies upon its side, twitching its lips, and now and then giving a convulsive little kick. He watches it stolidly, like a statue of puzzled patience. "What's the matter with your horse?" he is asked. "Pretty near dead." "And what are you going to do?" "Doan't know, sir, unless summun comes along." And

then he resumes his silent sentry, staring straight at nothing like a mounted Horse Guards sentinel. Presently, another little boy is fallen in with. He is coming from a farm in whose dank straw-yard, trodden into deep mud near the horse-pond, half-a-dozen white and brown bullocks and a chestnut colt, with a long silver tail and mane, are feeding out of grey and yellow structures like unpainted four-post bedsteads without tops, whilst a white-legged tortoise-shell cat is daintily picking her way through the drier rick-yard. He is a very thin, "weedy" little boy, with pale brown face and languid brown eyes. He wears a peakless cap, an old, red comforter, and a faded, tattered smock. He pants as he propels his two-wheeled barrow, and shovels horse-dung into it with a rusty spade. He looks as if he must be very badly off, but he does not turn out to be so, according to the general notion of the state of things in the South Midlands. This is the account he gives of himself—each item pulled out, like a cork, by a separate question.  
"I'm gooin' thirteen, sir. Yes, I goo to school. To the chapel school. It begins at nine a-Sundays. No, I don't goo to no school a-weekdays. I have meat about twice a week. Meat such as *I* eat (said very proudly) costs ninepence a pound—tenpence sometimes. Beef and mutton both. I'm pickin' up dung for Mr. —. I get him a cartload a week. Two barrers-full a day. Each on 'em takes me about a hour. Miles, I s'pose, I walks. He gives me 5s. 6d. a week. Little boys (said very superciliously) as goos crow-keepin' an' such, gets

3s. a-week, sometimes 3s. 6d.—that's what *they* gets. Rest o' my time I'm plaitin'. I get three-halfpence a score\* for that. Can't says a score o' what. We call it a *score*. Don't know what you mean, sir. I can do any kind o' work (said with unlimited confidence in the universality of his genius). Yes, sir, I should be glad to get summut else to do."

On again through the lonely lanes. The brown hedges are sprinkled with bursting buds, yellow catkins dangle from them, and "palm" branches are buttoned with silver-grey floss silk. Little wrens run in and out of the hedges like mice, homely brown sparrows chirp inside, and in the fields beyond, larks, singing as they go, are making painful efforts to rise like young poets. The furze is in blossom, the hedge-side grass is starred with dandelions, and just above the ditches the cuckoo-pint raises its glossy spear-heads. Some of the fences are of dead thorn branches—sometimes sliced from the live stems which show their transversely truncated torsos close by—arranged in zigzags. Beside others lie faggots of brushwood, a tumbril-load of which a tiny Hodge, in Jim Crow, smock, and buskins, is driving off as seriously as if he was a grandfather. Little brooks, spanned by little plank bridges, cross the road. The gates have a park-like look, being almost all painted white. Under the clipped hedges, and on the brown furrows, smock-frocks squat, with their legs apart like the legs of compasses, munching their bread and cheese in sociable silence,

\* Of yards.

One man eats his all alone in the middle of a meadow blotched with old mole-hills. Over a ploughed field, littered with lumps of chalk, toils another smock-frock, lifting up his legs as if his goal lay, in Yankee phrase, "somewhere on the other side of eternity." After the rush of city life, there is something very refreshing in the leisureliness of country life. *Clodhopper* seems a very inappropriately jerky name to give to ploughmen. As the cochineal insect takes its colour from the opuntia, so country people seem to take their tone from the crops in the midst of which they live. The grass and the corn do not hurry—and why should *they*? In a wide meadow, ruled with wheeled sheep-troughs, two other men are plodding, in equally leisurely style, from the far-off yellow litter and cut plum-cake-like stack, with pitchforked loads of raw and hay upon their backs. Here a plough rests, as if asleep between the furrows; there a plough, drawn by a tandem of four black horses, or three brown horses with black manes and tails, turns the sparsely-green soil into bristly-brown clods. The plough is steered by a man in neutral-hued monkey-jacket and corduroy breeches, and a little fellow in a grey-green smock cracks his big whip as he walks backwards alongside his team. Yonder a dim-blue, single-horsed, two-manned plough goes backwards and forwards. In the next field two or three men are stooping over the dark soil, dibbling holes with one hand whilst they dip the other into their leather seed-pouches. In another field a brown and a white horse are drawing harrows, driven with cord reins by a man in a

red shirt, which blazes like a poppy on the brown clods : an old fellow, in a rusty velveteen shooting-jacket and dingy white hat, trudging at the same time, with his gun under his arm, over the barren-looking square.

But now there are signs of a village. Plump, snowy-white ducks are paddling in the ditches ; and a man is forking manure into a tumbril from the "farmer's short-cake" that raises its straw-bristled tableland above the roadside turf. The village is a cluster of cottages ; some two-storied, with red brick walls and slated roofs ; some of yellow-washed timber-panelled brick, with high low-hanging roofs of mossy thatch ; and others of white-washed brick and flint, both showing through the wash, with cracked grey shutters that hang down like table-leaves, and tiny quasi-dormer windows in the low thatched roofs. At some of the cottage doors women stand plaiting straw. In the churchyard the sexton is turfing a grave, but jealous for his village's reputation in a sanitary point of view, he anxiously explains that it is an *old* grave. He invites the wayfarer to enter the vestry to see the church's "lions"—the carved closet in which the surplices are kept, and a painting of Moses and Aaron. Hard by the church is a sleepy, cosy old mansion, with an avenue of trees in a green paddock begoldened with Lent lillies ; and hard by that, the red rectory with an ivy-clad, bee-hived lodge. In the outskirts of the village stands a square, low, old-fashioned farm-house, with fruit-trees trained upon its walls. There are old grassy orchards here and there, in one of which

hangs a public-house sign. Altogether the village seems an "idyllic" kind of place to live in ; but let us hear how its inhabitants do live in it. At another public-house, labourers are taking their mid-day rest and beer. One of them is picked out by his fellows to give the information required, as being most familiar with all kinds of agricultural labour. He has scanty, iron-grey hair, moistly wisped down on his weather-beaten forehead, and white stubble on his chin. He wears corduroy trousers and a bone-buttoned fustian jacket, and his brick-dust-coloured throat is bare. This is what he says, spontaneously and in reply to questions :—"Yes, sir, I can do any kind o' hagricult'r al labour. Ast anybody that knows me—I don't care who ye ast. I've worked for Mr. —— and Mr. —— close by ; an' you can goo to them when you've done talkin' to me. I'll goo from the plough even to the buildin' an' thetchin', an' that takes it all through. I've been a prizeman at the buildin' an' thetchin'. Law bless ye, sir, it ain't confined to *this* parish ! Men comes from thirty and forty miles round —t'other side a long way o' the Chilterns : 15s. is the first prize, and 12s. 6d. the second. I can't say what the third is. I never got so low as that. I get 5s. the square, naked work, a-thetchin', an' 3s. 6d. the other. P'raps I'm better off than some—moor so than many be. The work's in my hands, an' I know how to do it, an' so they can't take it out. A ploughman hereabouts may get 14s. a week, an' a shepherd the same, but, take it all round, wages is 10s. or 11s. Some of the farmers let

out their work at haytime and harvest, an' then you may get moor. But then you're days and days out o' work in the year. I reckon I don't get moor than eight months out o' the twelve ; an' my boys don't get that. Yes, you may call me an 'odd man,' if you like—I'll turn my hand to anything. An' so'll my boys. One on 'em's sixteen, an' the other's quite growed up. An' I've had to keep them two great boys all winter—an' will if I can. Yes, all the winter I have—'cept when there come a machine, an' they got 2s. or 1s. 6d. a day, for takin' away the straw and chaff. They'll goo crow-keepin'—sixpence they'll push in for ; and what's moor, they'll bring it home. That'll buy a loaf o' bread. Half a loaf, we say, is better than none—much moor a whole 'un. If they could but earn a shillin' a week each certain, that 'ud be summut. Sometimes my youngest son gets a job pig-drivin' to Aylesbury, but the soldiers is al'ays at him, an' that makes him rusty, an' he swears. He don't want to be forced to goo for a soldier. He's a great tall chap, an' so's his brother. You see, sir, he ain't eighteen yet, an' so his time wouldn't count, would it, sir? I want him to try for the police, but he says 'No, father, I'll never be a bobby—not if I starve.' I'm six in family, sir—four gals, youngest is eight. All on 'em plaits, but that's like throwin' one 'a'-penny arter another. You buy sixpenn'orth o' straw, an' you gets 9d. for it when it's done, an' it takes you four or five hours to do it. Some p'r'aps, can do the thirty yards in three and a half—that's accordin' to quickness. 2d. a week is what's paid at the

plaiting schools. If I'd to pay that for my gals now, it would pull me all to pieces. There'd be 8d. a week goin' out—see how that would muddle me. A penny a week, I think, is what they pay at the parish school. I've no wish to speak ill o' hanybody, but my opinion o' parsons mostly is, that what they've got they'll keep. There's no lace-makin' just here. There may be about Buckingham—I never was so far. No, you won't see women workin' in the fields here, 'cept, p'raps, a wife reapin' with her husband at harvest. No, sir, I've no wish to hemigrate—not as I knows of. Of course, if I could get such wages as them you tells me on in—where was it?—an' house an' food too—I'd take 'em, if I could get to 'em. There's people here that get out-door relief, but I can't tell ye much about that. I don't suppose I could get so much as a parish-doctor to come to me. Yes, we've a club—it's held here—sixteenpence a month. Whit Monday's our club-day. *Live*, sir? We live as we can, an' not as we would. I've had turnip-tops, an' nothing else, an' them begged. Bless you, we've no garden-ground—not so much as we could put a plant in. Pigs! There ain't many pigs about here. If we could keep 'em, we ain't able to get 'em. There was a deal o' distress here last winter. For four days I'd nothing—next to nothing to eat, though I was in work—I was clearin' off a score. If we'd had sickness, God A'mighty only knows where we should ha' been. Arter all, the Lord al'ays provides somehow. If He hadn't put that there gift o' mine to do anything into my hands, how

would my poor children ha' got on? I don't know who ye are, sir, or what ye are; but I've told ye more about myself than I ever told any man afore. If I was to tell ye all, it would fill that there black book ye're writin' in."

And next for a talk with a shepherd. He is a ruddy, robust young fellow, standing in the midst of his ewes and lambs in a hurdled oblong of turnips; and when he sees a stranger suddenly turn aside from the road, climb the hedge bank, stride over the low thorn fence, and straddle across the hurdles, the stalwart young shepherd takes his hands from his pockets, and looks very much inclined to knock the stranger down, under the impression that such eccentrically audacious proceedings can only spring from rabid ovine-kleptomania.

But the shepherd's pipe is empty, and the stranger professes to want a pipe-light. The production of a tobacco-pouch on one side, and the striking of a lucifer held, when alight, between hollowed hands, on the other, are the preliminaries of peace; and when a little lamb, which the shepherd has been obliged to take from its mother, runs up bleating first to him, and then takes its stand between the stranger's legs, rubbing its white ears and black face against his muddy boots, the shepherd relaxes into conversation. Close by us a pied wagtail runs in and out under the sheep's bellies without the least alarm. Its remarkable tameness is remarked upon; but it does not interest the shepherd: he professes even not to know the wagtail under that or any other name. His sheep are half-breds, he says; but he cannot tell

between what. "That's a Down," he adds, pointing to a plump broad-backed, black-faced ewe; but he cannot say *what* "Down." He gets 14s. a week, thinks others get as much. Carters and ploughmen get 13s. anyhow. He has lived in the neighbourhood six years, and was never three months out o' work. *He* never heard of any distress "to speak on" thereabouts. "What we eat or what we buy, sir, do you mean?" he cross-questions, when asked how often he gets meat. "I get meat twice a day," he goes on, "an' I expect most o' the people here-abouts gets it once or twice a day. Meat here's 8d. and 9d. Couldn't get pork last winter under 8½d. The price o' bread makes a diff'rence. When bread's down, the masters lower the wages. Yes, I've a pretty sight o' lambs, an' I haint lost a yow this 'ear—that's pretty good, we reckon. Yes, them Australian wages ain't bad; but I suppose they don't do much else than shepherd in them parts. But I must be gettin' on—it's pretty nigh milkin' time."

A little brown-faced fellow in a blue-and-white neckerchief, buskins, and a very ragged jacket, is asked what he has got in the basket on his shoulder. "My *old* coat," he answers, looking his interrogator sturdily in the face, as if determined to defend that treasure at all hazards against felonious appropriation.

"How old are you, my boy?"

"Just gone ten."

"And what are you doing?"

"Stone-pickin' in the fields."

"When did you begin?"

"I've been at it a 'ear."

"What do you get?"

"2s. 6d. a week."

"Do you go to school?"

"No, I doan't goo to school—*no*," answers the small boy, with scornful emphasis, as if he thought such a mode of spending time would be very puerile for a person of his manly, wage-earning importance.

Another white finger-post points the way to another whity-brown village church, with an embattled tower. Green-powdered beech-boles (the *Sylva* of Buckinghamshire—the shire of the *ham* in the midst of *boc*—still justifies its name) rise in the green graveyard flush with the top of the roadside wall. Green, white-and-yellow speckled tombstones, lean back in the hushed sleeping place—a very different *κοιμητήριον* from the Tower Hamlets' Cemetery, with its ever rushing and rumbling trains on the straddling viaducts hard by. A little farther on is another quiet, quaintly-named, and quaintly-built jumble of Buckinghamshire cottages—lichened gables, mossy thatch, red brick, yellow brick, dusky plaster, timber, parallelograms, white, grey, green, and black weatherboard. The roar of the blacksmith's bellows, the rhythmical cadence of the hammers on the anvil, in the low black forge, are almost the only sounds of human life throughout the place. A cottage-door stands open. Two or three children are squatted before the hearth fire, on the pitted, lanky-bricked floor of the only

lower room. A young woman is ironing on a low, unpainted table, the chief piece of furniture, placed beneath the back window. An attempt to obtain "social statistics" is made by the stranger who has stepped in, but the young woman takes alarm. "If you please, sir, I'd rather not do it," she says ; and fidgets about like a hen, when a hawk is hovering over a farmyard, until the intruder beats an apologetic retreat. A neighbour is less cautious, and more communicative. He is a very feeble old man, with a grey-bristled chin, and limbs that seem to be rather hoisted up and down by halyards, with half-jammed blocks, than moved by spontaneous volition. "I'm seventy-six," he pipes. "Yes, I s'pose I'm past work. I've put my shoulder out ; but I was just gooin' to try to walk into Buckin'am. The duke may be a very good landlord, for aught I know, but I don't live under him. My cottage belongs to Mr. ——. We've only the lower room, and one above. Yes, there's a good many like that. Some, by chance, may have two rooms over. Yes, men with ever so many children lives the same. Me an' my old woman gets three shillins a week from the parish, an' three loaves ; and a shillin' has to goo out o' that for rent. There's been hard times here last winter. Lace ? Lace makin' ain't what it was. Little uns may get 2d. a day, and big gals, mayhap, 6d. Yes, a good many on 'em make it hereabouts—yes, both in Buckin'am and the villages ; but it's a poor livin'."

There is nothing "sensational" in the English peasant's life—except when he turns poacher, and shoots the

keeper through the head, or gets knocked down and taken up himself. He is not a piquant subject for a character-sketch. He bears his "prosperity" at 14s. a week, and his semi-starvation on 1s. and a loaf and a-half a week, with apparently equal stolidity. It must be admitted, too, that a good many of our town poor—to say nothing of country air—are worse lodged than the peasant, are as badly off, in a pecuniary point of view, as he is at his worst, and would think his receipts at his best a little fortune. But, still, there is something specially pathetic in the way in which the hard-up farmer's man speaks of his lot. He grumbles, of course, but he does not grumble like the hard-up in towns—as if he had an undoubted right to a great deal better fate ; he accepts his destiny in a quiet, half-stunned fashion, as if he felt that *he* could not have been born to anything better, however disagreeable it may be. It is *normal* for him to live from hand to mouth, with no hopes of better things beyond. He does not turn a Jacobin like the town proletary.\* Slower wits, no doubt, have something to do with the peasant's sullen resignation. If he were not so apathetic, he could find better markets for his labour. Still, there is something respectable in the unenvious way in which the peasant speaks of his "betters." He has to acknowledge "social superiority" far more constantly than the town poor are compelled to—it is, indeed, painful to see a hard-working Hodge touching his hat, under

\* Mr. Arch and the lock-out have, between them, altered this state of things

a sense of duty, as if he were still a serf, to any one who passes him “dressed like a gentleman,” although clothes may be the sole point of superiority which the touched-to can claim over the toucher; and in all manly virtues, and *real* gentlemanlike feeling, the one who has obeisance done him may be far inferior to the one who does it. But still Hodge goes on touching his hat; and his way of thinking of those “above him” is sweeter-blooded, so to speak, than that of the town struggler. Hodge would naturally like to be better off, but he does not want to rob others in order to become so. He still reverences the squire, and all kinds of spiritual and secular pastors and masters; that is, unless he has had his somewhat slavish deference sapped by a sojourn in towns. He sometimes learns ultra-democracy there: *ecce signum*—I overheard a Buckinghamshire bumpkin describing his experiences in some hospital from which he had recently been discharged—not the County Infirmary: Buckinghamshire people boast of *that* as a model institution which “Londoners might take copy from.”

“The doctor came to me,” said the discharged patient, “and ‘Young man,’ says he, ‘you’re a deal better.’ ‘Excuse me, sir,’ says I, ‘but you’re a fool!’ Yes, I did, though he was a doctor.”

“But that was cheeky,” said the patient’s companion.

“An’ wouldn’t *you* ha’ been cheeky?” was the rejoinder. “Don’t a man know his own in’ards better than another man?”



## V.

### THE BANFFSHIRE FISHERMAN.

**I**T is August, but August in Scotland. The night before last, as the steamer, crowded with sportsmen, dogs, and tourists, splashed and panted northwards, the sun sank into the calm sea like a huge disc of glowing ruby, its level beams turning the unfoaming waters, in a long line of trembling spangles, into rich red wine ; but here, on the shores of the Moray Frith, sheep and cattle, shepherds and cowherds, are cowering under any shelter they can find from the fierce blast, and the drenched wild-flowers are shivering in ague-fits ; and last night every fishing boat that ventured out had to race back into the little harbours, laden with cold hail instead of caller herring.

A keen breeze still blows strongly from the sea. As far as the eye can reach long ranks of "white horses" are galloping over the green, grey, and blue Frith. Silvery spray curves and cascades, snowy foam boils over

the rough walls of the tiny fishing harbours. The men and carts and horses down on the sodden sands, and the dark seaweed that is being forked into the carts from the dark rocks, are all flecked with creamy scum. The bold headlands that run into the Frith like Roman noses foam at the nostrils like war-horses, and then are blotted from the view by passing rain squalls. In creeks that give no notion of refuge the sea is churning itself into viscous cream against, and over, and between fantastically jagged needles and masses of grey-black rock, that would crunch any boat luckless enough to run foul of them, far more easily than a monkey cracks a nut. The wind catches up the scum in balls the size of humming-birds, and whirls them about very much as the perplexed grown-up gulls are wheeling. Solitary under the lee of lane corners, in little groups upon the strand, or sitting in their boats, which pitch and roll even in the comparatively smooth water of the inner harbour, the herring-fishers are anxiously, but for the most part silently, speculating as to their chance of getting out within the week.

Sometimes they stoop to a little chaff.

“Ye’ll nae win’ oot the nicht, Sandie,” says one, pointing to the “white horses” that are flinging about their flying manes with fiercer joy than ever.

“Hech, man, ye’re nae wise,” answers Sandie.  
“Twull be a fine nicht the nicht.”

A manly-looking race are these bearded, copper and bronze complexioned, silently-waiting fishermen. There is a *real* look in their rough sea-clothes that suggests,

from contrast, very contemptuous recollections of the *quasi-naval* (with a dash of T. P. Cooke) costumes in which fair-weather yachtmen, and sham yachtmen, parade themselves on shore. Salt-candied bonnets and cloth and fur caps ; round "shiny" hats, with all the shine taken out of them ; black and yellow sou'-westers ; grey and striped nightcaps ; comforters as grizzled and bristly as their owners' beards ; blue guernseys with dimmed initials still partially distinguishable on the breast ; blue shirts, grey shirts, shirts the colour of coffee grounds ; double-breasted waistcoats and trousers of dingy blue, rust-hued, and fucus-hued cloth ; trousers tucked into sea-boots, smugglers' breeches hanging over sea-boots like a pair of petticoats ; tarry fustian jackets and trousers ; oilskin jackets and trousers, as stiff as boards, and oilskin waistcoats not coming much below the arm-pits ; tarry canvas jackets and trousers ; dark trousers, particoloured in the legs with canvas like a horse-breaker's, and patched on the stern with a *pannus albus* of the same that gleams in the sunlight like a freshly-burnished door-plate : *that* is the Banffshire Fisherman's list of fashions —and whatever he wears looks picturesque, because *he* looks such a *man* to the backbone in it.

Whilst this wind lasts, however, even Banffshire fishermen must stay at home, and so, until we can get out to sea with them, let us wander along their foaming Frith. The shore-paths wind in and out, and up and down, the treeless grassy, limestone-faced and limestone-littered hills. Here and there they dip into a warm little

hollow, with its one or two boats drawn up on the beach, and its one or two thatched or stone-roofed, grey or white fishermen's cottages, nestling in the snuggest corners, with sloping potato-crofts behind ; elder-bushes in blossom hanging over the rough stone walls. No sooner does the path rise out of the sunny hollow, however, than the wind catches the wanderer again, and, spreading and swelling out his clothes, drives him along as if with stu'n sails and balloon-jib set ; or else it blows right down his throat until he thinks he has carried away his teeth, and begins to fear that his hair as well as his hat will be blown off his head if he does not beat up, against a breeze that pushes like a beam, for the shelter of yonder table-land of crushed road-metal stored in a craggy nook. Under such circumstances it is astonishing to see corn at all, but not at all astonishing to find that the little crofts of oats and barley that *are* seen are about a foot high, and very sparsely tinged with yellow. Still there is no lack of vegetation on these shore hills, whistling in summer with November's "angry sough ;" stunted furze, with sea-bronzed wilted blossom ; broom with green pods and with black ; red clover, white clover; thistles galore ; rusty-spired sorrel ; patches of pink and purple heather, softening the harsh angles of the out-cropping boulders ; clusters of big bluebells, more plentiful even than separate daisies in England ; great dog-daisies ; dwarf hemlock ; ground-ivy ; creeping shoes-and-stockings ; thousands of pale purple, purple and white, and purple and yellow wild pansies ; and millions

of the constellated heads of the golden rag-weed. Cows, herded by old men, and little boys, and girls with their frock-skirts over their heads, crop the rough grass, and tethered sheep, black and white, butt at one another for the possession of promising hillocks. A little farther inland the crops are still, for the most part, "as green as kale," but here and there rise a few yellow cocks, like small white-ants' hills, garnered between black posts covered with black fishing-nets. A little farther still, the road and the telegraph wire run between good crops of unsfenced corn, potatoes, and turnips. Here is a pretty new farmhouse, with a park-like front-paddock, and a cart-lodge crammed with modern carts that are resting, like Yankees, with their legs up. Yonder is a low, closed white smithy, with an assemblage of out-patient ploughs, harrows, cultivators, &c., of the most scientific make, clustered on its little green. Not far off, on the evening I am thinking of, I witnessed a scene of dreamy peace, although the wind was wailing, and the waves were thundering, on the other side of the bare hill that sheltered it. One of the primitive little, rough-built, woollen factories of the district was taking its deserted evening rest. Its tiny water-force no longer turned its tiny water-wheel, but hurried, like a boy let out of school, down to a sunny-sparkling burn. On the other side of the little rustic bridge spread a dark pool, shaded with richly-drooping trees, out of whose lush foliage the silver bark of the "lady of the woods" and the coral clusters of the mountain-ash gleamed like mellow

lamps : a pool absolutely unruffled, save when a rare fish leaped for food or fun. On the grassy bank of the dark pool, at the foot of a thickly-treed old orchard, stood, or rather tottered, two hoary old cottages ; one of them roughly inscribed "To Let." The only visible or audible tenants of the buildings were a little girl, sitting on the stone threshold of the one to be let, and a white-haired, bare-legged toddler who was pelting half-a-dozen waddling, quacking ducks ; his little nurse meanwhile exclaiming, with far more pride than reproof in her tone, "Hech, Wattie man, wad ye stane the dookies ?" Close by the sea, moreover, woods and lawns encircle Duff House, with as softly luxuriant a verdure as if they sloped down to the Thames at Richmond instead of to the Doveran at Banff. The policy-trees are bearded with moss, lichen, and creepers ; the hedges blush with red dog-roses ; and a wild flower-spangled hay crop might be mown off the obliterated roofs of the lodges and out-houses. And not far from the sea the road runs through noble forests, disfigured by straight cuttings like boundary lines between "the States" and "Dominion," and raw scabs of clearing, but still feasting the eye with miles of stately Scottish firs, standing shoulder to shoulder, on ridge, on hillside, and in valley ; their red boles buried up to the ankle in glossy bracken and amethystine heather.

But it is time to get back to the shore. The Banffshire fishing-stations differ in size ; some are quaint old towns that do not depend solely upon fishing ; more are quaint old villages, to which the "take" is a matter of

literally vital importance. But, in all, the fisherman's quarters are so much alike that a typical sketch may be drawn of them. Scattered singly, and gable on, upon the braes, arranged in lanes, that cross at right angles, right down to the shore, stand the fishermen's cottages. A railway runs along part of the shore of the Moray Frith ; but there are fishermen's cottages outside the single line of rails. Close by the shore stands a life-boat house. On the top of the highest brae is perched a low, white, flag-staffed coast-guard station, with a black cannon, and drying fishing-nets, and bleaching linen, upturned linen-baskets, and staggering linen-posts, upon the green outside. Most of the cottages nearest the sea obstinately refuse to peep at it even. There is not a window in the backs they have turned upon the Frith that moistens and mildews their thatch with its spray. Other roofs are of stone, and slate, and tile. Some of the cottages are of white-washed rough plaster, others are picturesquely mottled—stones red and white and grey and brown and blue and black and yellow, with, now and then, a bit of curiously-charactered "Portsoy marble," being welded into their walls with broad lines of white cement. Some of the cottages have kale-yards behind, and tiny gardens smothered with flowers in front. Scarlet geraniums and green-and-golden musk-plants bask in a good many of the windows. Sometimes a black peat-stack is piled against the white gable. Split fish and strings of herring dangle on the walls. There are a few dismantled cottages, whose roofless, dilapidated gables stand up black

and jagged as decayed teeth ; but, although the Banffshire fishermen's dwellings are not all as clean as they might be inside, they generally have a trim, business look outside, which is a refreshing contrast to one who has seen that melancholy jumble of dirt, damp, dilapidation, dilatoriness, and destitution, the Claddagh colony of fishermen in Galway. At the doors stand women in white hip-jackets and white night-caps, nursing babies in white night-caps that are comical miniatures of the maternal pattern. Other women and girls, with kilted petticoats, which disclose, in a good many instances, what Mr. Charles Reade calls "grand and powerful limbs ;" and hooded with gown-skirts and plaid shawls, out of whose covert peep, sometimes good, if rather hard, features, and almost always keen good eyes, are clustered round the roadside well or spring, carrying water from it, or trudging along with fish-creels at their backs. A bronze-faced, black-haired, classically-featured little girl, and a red-haired little girl with huge freckles running into one another and overlapping one another on her broad flat face, discover a stranger mooning about, and accost him with "If ye please, wull ye gie me a ha'-penny to buy a fush ?" A "fush" seems a queer thing for those little mermaids to be in want of ; and there is a dash of satire on the "pock-puddin' fule-body" in their "Thank'ee" when he complies with their request. In spite of sea-air, sea-water, sea-weed, and reiterated complaints of the badness of the fishing, there is everywhere an outcropping smell of fish. The sanded parlour of the

fishermen's public, punctuated with round spittoons, and hung round with prints of Osborne, vessels in full sail, and vessels in distress, reeks of fish like an empty herring barrel. There is the same odour in the atmosphere of the red-flagged hovel that advertises refreshments by means of a single biscuit tilted against its little window, and an announcement of "Small Beer" displayed outside—a quart bottle of the said mixture of watered vinegar and blacking being procurable for 2d. Herring-barrels are serried in the court-yards, of which a glimpse is caught under low archways of beetle-browed black buildings, and herring-barrels are stacked along the two quays of the little harbour, over whose walls the Moray Frith is boiling, or dribbling down in lanky grey corkscrew curls, and at the end of one of which a sturdy little red lighthouse-kin sticks up its lantern as if it thought its Eddystone congener a pretentious sham. Heaving in the harbour, drawn up high and dry upon the shingly beach, fishing-boats are clustered—grey, green, black, brown, red, and some of a "golden-syrup"-like yellow. If it were not for the B.F. number something or other, painted on their bows, it would be hard to distinguish their stem from their stern when their rudders are unshipped. Some look mere gigs, and even the broad-beamed herring-boats, being undocked, do not look the most comfortable of craft to spend a stormy night at sea in. Other such boats are building in the seaside yards. There is scarcely any shop which does not minister in some way to fishermen's wants—layers of oilskins, that have to be wrenched

asunder with a Milo-rending-the-oak expenditure of strength, being even stored in ladder-approached lofts over shops in which the lassies of the locality are buying muslins. Fish is King in this part of the world.

"If you want to see Banffshire fishermen, you must go to Buckie," said the courteous proprietor of the *Banffshire Journal*; "although I am afraid you will find most of them away—at Fraserburgh, and Peterhead, and Wick. There is not much chance of your getting out, if this wind lasts; but Buckie men will be readier than most to risk their lives with you, if they think they have any chance of a take."

Accordingly for Buckie I started. The locally famous fisher-colony is in the world-beyond-gas, but it is linked on to the gas-burning world by the telegraph wire; the humming of which, Buckie bee-masters say, sadly disturbs their bees. It hummed drearily as the wintry August breeze swept over it and the fenceless fields, when I travelled to Buckie. In the little 'bus that carried me part of the way, I witnessed a touching scene of ruggedly gentle sympathy. We stopped to take up two weary fishwives waiting by the roadside. One was tall, gaunt, and weather-beaten as Meg Merrilies, although originally of a lighter complexion. She was muffled in a red-and-black shawl, and had an uncanny habit of dropping her jaw, which made her white nightcap look like a Lazarus-napkin. The other woman was shorter, darker, and plumper, and carried a white-nightcapped baby, tightly swaddled in a heather-and-black shawl, under the green-and-black shawl

with which the mother was hooded. A fat, rosy-faced, merry, winsome, though strongly fish-scented lassie, was this little Mary, but her mother seemed to have no heart to respond to her little coaxing pranks and prattling ; and so Meg Merrilies took the child upon her lap. Presently the mother dropped back in a fainting fit. Mary was instantly bundled on to the nearest passenger's knees without a word of apology, and Meg began to stroke her gossip's face, smooth back her hair, and croon over her with a child-like softness that was startling in a woman who looked as if she could have knocked down an ox with her gnarled knuckles. When the fainting fit had passed, the poor woman drew her shawl closer over her head, squeezed herself tighter into her corner, and sobbed as if her heart was breaking. Meg still held and stroked her hand, but found a moment to glance round and explain, " Hech, sirs, she's heard that her man is lost at the Wick fushin'." And then down dropped Meg's jaw, as if it never could come up again ; and during the rest of her ride she continued to stroke her friend in silence, with the most genuine expression of sympathy I ever saw, on her harsh, leather-skinned features.

" Wives an' mithers, maist despairin',  
Ca' them lives o' men."

Those pathetic lines came to my mind again the first morning I spent in Buckie. I went with the Inspector of Poor to see a poor girl identify, by the clothes, the body of her drowned father, which had been washed on

shore the night before. In April, eight Lossiemouth salmon-fishers were lost, and now in August the sea had given up the last body.

The girl was not the bereaved fisherman's daughter an artist would draw from imagination. She carried a parasol, and wore craped black silk, and a chignon under her black straw hat. The bitterness of her father's death had passed, and she asked questions and answered them in a voice that was quiet, but still seemingly unmoved. This matter-of-fact way of regarding the fisherman's end made it, however, somehow, all the more pathetic to a stranger. We went into a curing-shed, half full of barrels, baskets, crans, tubs, vats, &c. At one end hung a great slate chalked with "487 boxes." Herring-barrels were ranged on the little quay outside, above which rose the masts of herring-boats. Nightcapped crones peeped in at the door, in greedy enjoyment of the temporary excitement which the scene afforded. Larking boys peeped in also, until sent flying by an official, "What's the use o' ye?" In a dark corner stood a knot of old fishermen, hushed, but not much graver than their wont, and all with their hats on, although they stood beside a black coffin with rope handles, on the top of which lay a pair of sodden sea-boots, and a bundle of sodden woollen rags. In spite of the fresh air that blew into the shed, and of the disinfectant that was sprinkled over the rags, and dribbled by means of a bit of paper beneath the prized-up coffin-lid, it was sickening to stand in that dark corner. A kneeling policeman methodically turned over the

clothes, and the daughter identified them in as business-like a manner.

"Your faither had nae waistcoat on?"

"Na."

"Was this his shirt?"

"Ay—mither made it," &c., &c.

When the dreary catechism had been gone through, it was strange to see the gusto with which the waiting crones received the official intimation—

"They maun hae a hearse. In fac', nae railway-station would tak' in yon corp."

Stolidly as the Lossiemouth fisherman's coffin was regarded, a great many of the Banffshire fisherfolk are still very superstitious. "They hae married in and in, until I won'er they arena half fules," an informant remarked to me. At any rate, they have handed down from generation to generation the not very wisely weird beliefs which the "ever-sounding and mysterious main" is apt to breed in those who dwell upon its banks and have business on its bosom. The fishermen on the west side of the little burn that divides Buckie plume themselves, however, upon their superior intelligence, and speak with amused compassion of the superstitions which still obtain amongst their east-side brethren. No very fraternal feeling, though, exists between the west and east siders. Not very long ago they were forbidden to intermarry, and if an east-side man did marry a west-side girl, he was sent to Coventry for life by all his tribesmen. To this day, I was told, there are east-side men who, if any stranger asked them

"Whar are ye gingin'?" would turn back without a word and refuse to go to sea. "Are ye sure your name's no Ross?" was the cross-question put to me, *more Scoto*, when I was inquiring as to the likeliest way of getting a night's herring-fishing. "Ay, but *that'll mak'* them think of a herrin', and, maybe, they won't coont it lucky," was the rejoinder, when I had given my right name. "Ye'd better ca' yoursel' Pritchard. Port Knockie men, if they thocht they'd got a Ross or an Anderson on board, would pitch him overboard like Jonah, an' the east-side Buckie men would do the same to a Coull."

Owing to the system of marrying, the stock of both Christian and surnames is very limited in the Banffshire fishing-stations. The wag who wanted to get a seat in the crowded pit of a London theatre shouted into it, "Mr. Smith's house is on fire!" and instantly had a couple of hundred seats to pick from. There are analogous names which would half empty Banffshire fishing-villages, if all the owners of the names rushed out when they heard them. I saw three nearly adjoining cottages in Buckie, each tenanted by a John Cowie "Carrot." As a consequence of this state of things, "tee-names" are largely used, not only in conversation, but also in the addresses of letters. And sometimes a long string of tee-names has to be run through before the individual wanted can be differentiated satisfactorily. "Vhere does Such-a-body live?" "Fhilk Such-a-body?" "Lang Such-a-body." "Fhilk Lang Such-a-body?" "Lang Sandy Such-a-body." "But thilk Lang Sandy Such-a-body?" &c., &c.

A word before we go to sea on the religious status of the Banffshire fishermen. It may be the case that hysteria is too often characterised as the "work of the Spirit." The patients recover from their physical disease, and, as might be expected, show little sign of moral improvement. But in Banffshire I heard of a revival which seems to have done permanent moral good. Gardenstown, a fishing-station a few miles to the east of Macduff, was and is famous for its exceptional fishing "luck," but it used also to be famous for the exceptional quantities of whisky it consumed. Some time ago a revival took place in Gardenstown: the demand for whisky there instantly dropped to almost *nil*, and at that nearly negative register, I was told by indisputable authority, it still continues.

But the wind has gone down considerably, and at last there is a chance of getting out to sea. The shrewd, straightforward, brusquely-civil little fisherman to whom I am introduced, at first objects to take me. "Such as you canna stan' what we can—ye maunna think it's pleasurin'," he says. He looks as if he thought me considerably nearer the status of a rational being when I explain that it is for the sake of business, and not pleasure, that I want to go out; but still, when he does at last consent to take me, he warns me with a "Hech, weel, ye maun expec' to hae your boo'l's shakken oot."

Muffling from observation the oilskins which have provoked the inextinguishable laughter of the maid of mine inn, I repair at the appointed time to the appointed

trysting-place, but find that my skipper is already in the harbour. "The fushers are a selfish an' an eematawteeve race—if ane wins oot, a' maun win oot," I had been told in Buckie. But though I run a chance of losing my trip, I really cannot see why Buckie fishermen should be sneered at for taking Time by the forelock. Do not landsmen of all kinds hurry towards a chance of profit? Have not a good many of them, at any rate, the sense to follow what experiencee has proved to be a good example? My skipper's wife kindly leaves her shop, and pilots me to the harbour, where she hands me over to the care of a man, who points out the *Diadem*, just getting under weigh. Good-tempered grins greet me as I hop on board from an inside boat; and then the business of getting out engrosses all professional attention.

Some of the boats *have* got out. One, strongly pulled by four long oars, is rising on the wave that curls in at the harbour's mouth. But there are still a score or two, poling and pulling out. On both the harbour-quays there is a crowd of women and children, with a few sulky stay-at-home men, who seem to resent the excitement which the going out of the boats occasions. Presently the women toss their hands, and rush towards the harbour-mouth, wailing wildly. Men scramble on shore from the boats, and rush along the quays, and try to force their way through the crowds of wailing women. My plucky little skipper, whom I had thought so impassive, scrambles past me as fleetly as any (though he *has* a lame leg to trail), lustily shouting, "Get oot the oars o' *Freedom*."

"A man overboard," he finds time to explain as he hurries past me; looking half disgusted, because, quite unable to discover what all the hubbub is about, I sit still. The sea is coming down in the aforesaid lanky grey cork-screw curls over the harbour-wall; but, both in and outside of the harbour, the waves look so sunny that it is difficult for a landsman to fancy that anything disastrous has happened. And nothing disastrous *has* happened. The wails cease; the women come back, looking half-disappointed. The men tumble back into their boats. "Fause alarm," says my skipper, as he crawls back into his. "*They* screechin' wummen! If the body had been droonin' we couldna hae got at him for 'em."

The seaweed-dangling hawsers splash in the lapping water, and are hauled on board. In another ten minutes there will not be a single herring-boat left in the little harbour, which, half-an-hour ago, was full of them. Our boat reaches the harbour mouth, and the long rough oars creak and bend on the iron tholes, as eight strong arms force her nose into the outside sea. A pile of black-red nets, corked with cracked black-brown bungs, weighted with stones, and buoyed with black leather, white-lettered bladders, that look like great footballs, affords the idler a lounging place astern. "Pull away, my hearties," shouts the skipper, as he shoves the rough tiller hard a-starboard, and the *Diadem* rises on the swell. After some stiff pulling, the foremast is stepped, and the rusty-black fore-sail (branded, like the bows, with B F 1098, and another number which Board of Trade regulations have rendered

obsolete) is sheeted home. The shorter so-called "mizzen," which is to be stepped amidships, is left for the present still resting on the crutch. Boat after boat hoists its canvas, until, wherever the eye turns, the sunny sea and sky, and the filmy hills on the other side of the Frith, are blotched with oblong rising and falling blots of rusty black.

"That's far eneuch, Sandie—grog, ho ! noo," cries the skipper ; and the crew come aft to loll, and smoke, and yarn, and sip a little whisky. It is the merest thimbleful that is taken by those who take any, and the skipper and the boy will not even take that. I make a feeble attempt to sketch the cluster of rough but manly, good-tempered, and not bad-looking fellows. "Pit your hair back, Peter," says one, with a grin, to the boy. "Sit up, Sandie, an' hae your portrait ta'en," says a second. "Ye'll let me hae just a sicht o' mysel' ?" says a third. I explain that I am merely scratching down hints for a real artist to develop into a sketch. "He *maun* be a good artist that can mak' anythin' oot o' *your* marks," contemptuously observes the skipper, who has looked over my shoulder.

This is our ship's company. The shrewd little skipper, who has freighted two boats—worth, with sails, &c., about £120 each—for the two months' summer fishing, and who cures the takes of seven boats; an ex-ship's carpenter, who has been in North and South America, China, and Japan; a brawny, smuggler-breeched and booted landsman, known as the Farmer; a pleasantly-

smiling, gipsy-faced young fellow in a blue guernsey, famous as the Fiddler ; a fustian-clad fisherman of twelve years' standing ; and freckled, comfortered, merry, saltiest of the salt, Boy Peter, who is always scratching his head and grinning at somebody, and who is kind enough to look upon me as his especial charge. The men tell me that they hope to make from £15 to £18 a head by their two months' fishing. They are hired hands, but are paid according to the take, measured in crans. The cran may be roughly described as a barrel with both ends knocked out. A hundred of these crans yield, on an average, a hundred and ten barrels of cured herrings. When one of the crew is told that rumour reports Banffshire fishermen to be very pecunious personages, he answers, with a short laugh, "Rich ! Ay. Plenty o' money when there's plenty o' fush ; but for ane that's rich there's twa that's poor in Bookie." When another is asked whether night-work in undocked boats is not sometimes rather unpleasant, he answers, in the same laughing tone, "When there's herrin' in the nets, ye dinna feel the work. It's when ye toil a' nicht an' catch naething that it's wearifu'." "Anything abune your neebours' tak' is coonted good fushin'," is the reply to an inquiry as to what is considered a satisfactory haul. "Saxty cran's an unco shot. We'll be well satisseed if we get thirty the nicht."

"But *we* dinna ca' oorsels Bookie fishermen," says the skipper, grinning at his grinning men. "A' oor best men are awa'. There's not half o' the Bookie boats in

Bookie. It's a queer crew we hae. There's a farmer, an' there's a fiddler, an' there's a mairchant o' GOOD WORDS. We'll be seein' oorsels in prent, I expec'. There's a good few readers o' GOOD WORDS in Bookie, an' if ye say aucht they dinna like, ye maun stan' by, for I'll get the credit o't, because I took ye oot."

One pipe is being handed from mouth to mouth like the tooth of the Grææ, but the Fiddler is puffing away at a metal-mounted, clouded bowl, which he maintains to be a genuine meerschaum. His comrades, in a good-tempered way, are very fond of chaffing the good-tempered Fiddler, and so *they* maintain that a better pipe can be bought in Aberdeen for a shilling, case and all. They next proceed to chaff him on his fiddle and his fiddling.

"It's a Cremona, I tell ye," he exclaims, when the price he puts upon his instrument is pooh-poohed; "an' I've seen fiddles in the papers priced at more than £50."

"I wadna gie ye fifty pence for 't," says the teasing Farmer.

"Ay, but, Jemmy," interposes the skipper, "ye wad gie fifty pence for a whup wi' a good thong to 't. Every man to his likin'. What do ye mak' by your fiddling, Fiddler-in-the-cottage-by-the-sea? Imposeetion's like to prosper."

"Ay, competeetion is the soul o' trade."

"*Imposeetion* I said, Fiddler. I didna say competeetion. Ye charge, an' ye canna play."

"Na, I never charge."

"That maks your ineequity a' the waur. Instead o' haein' a fair price, ye lay it on like the doctors whar ye think they'll bear 't."

"Weel, I hae gotten 10s. for a ball, an' Grant's son gets 30s. for three hoors o' play."

"Ay, man, but Grant's son gies ye music."

The imitative powers of the Buckie "dummy" are next discussed.

"A smart man needs nae teachin', the skipper oracularly remarks. "His whole time's takken up in observation."

"It's just his hobby," one of the men adds as a rider.  
"There's nae head in it, ye see."

After this philosophical stricture—not very complimentary to the member of the crew who has come on board simply to observe—silence and somnolence come down upon the speakers. Following the example of the other boats, we partly lower our sail, let the wet tiller thump at its pleasure, with monotonous thuds, against the up-and-downing stern, and light our fire of coal and chips in a battered old iron pot. The Farmer lies down and snores in the stern. The skipper and the rest of the crew sleepily crouch around the fire. A grey ribbon of smoke curls up and out from every boat we pass, or are passed by. Tillers are unshipped in some: all are steering themselves. Down go their red sides and their black sails till they are buried almost to the mast-head. Up they dap again, showing their fore-feet like plump rope-dancers; and then down they plunge into the trough

of the sea once more, with a fizzling rush of snowy foam about the “boos.” From one or two a sleepy song floats over the waves, but most of the crews, like our own, are napping. By-and-by the skipper hails me: “Come along, frien’, ye’ll be nane the waur o’ a cup o’ tea.” Seated on coils of rope, baskets, canvas, and the stone ballast of the boat, we drink our tea out of basins, and munch our bread and meat and oat-cake. The ex-carpenter prefers sop, and has a pannikin full of bobbing crusts simmering on the fire, which puffs its reek impartially into the faces of all who sit round it. After tea it grows chilly, and all the crew put on watch-coats, or clothe themselves in cap-a-pie suits of oilskin. Backwards and forwards we potter, hailing every boat we pass with, “Hae ye any idee hoo far the herrin’ is?” The reply is a monotonous “Na, na.” “It’s a chance shot the nicht. Wull we dodge or try, Sandy? Naebody kens,” says the skipper. For some time after the sun goes down we have the stars, and a patch of yellow light, in the cold heavens; but clouds creep over the sky, the wind freshens, rain begins to fall. “Wull ye licht me anither o’ your fusees, frien’, that I may see my watch?” the skipper, who is steering again, anxiously inquires from time to time. “D’ye see any fire in the water yet?” he keeps on asking the men, who are looking over the side. “When the water burns, we’ve a better chance o’ seein’ the fush,” he explains parenthetically to his passenger. “Whales an’ fools” are anxiously looked out for also, but they are very shy of showing. One gull, however, nearly knocks my hat

off. "Did ye see yon beast?" asks Peter, who is politely anxious that I should see everything that there is to be seen. The Lossiemouth revolving-light flowers into and fades out of the darkness, now ahead, and now astern ; the fire throws up a ruddy glow on the dark sail—that, and the dots of light in the other dark luggers and cutters we dance in amongst, and sometimes almost run into, looking the only cosy things on the black waters. The wind is howling now, the rain pours down, the black waters plump on board in curls of seething white. Backwards and forwards we potter drearily, but still the fish refuse to rise. At half-past eleven, however, up they come. The whilom silent boat is instantly the scene of wild excitement. "Ye'd better crawl forward, frien', there'll be awfu' confusion here," says the skipper, as the men rush about to lower the mast and prepare to shoot the net. An oar knocks me on the head, a heavy foot comes down upon my arm, another crushes my toes ; but all without the slightest malice. An idler is simply ignored on board a herring-boat when the fish rise. The skipper, as he scrambles past me, however, snatches time to say, "Ye'll hae some idee o' our confusion noo. Ye'd hae heard stronger language aboard some boats. Are they weel up, Peter?" he breaks off.

"Hech, it's a fine fleet," Peter shouts back. "Thick as thick an' weel up."

In the intense excitement of the crisis a look-out is no longer kept, and we almost run into a boat that is

cantering across our bows. Over goes the net in reaches —the buoys making the water splash fire as they are pitched overboard. When the canvas is taken off her, the boat jolts up and down, far worse than a cart over a ploughed field ; and, for the first time, I turn sick. But Peter will not allow me to curl myself up by the fire. “Crawl along,” he cries, “an’ I’ll show ye the fush swummin’.” Over the bulwarks I see phosphorescent sparkles, and hear, or fancy I hear, a multitudinous rush, whose noise is distinguishable from the dash and splash and effervescence of the waves. Then I turn in and get a snooze ; with my feet as near the fire, and my face as covered from the rain, as I can manage. The wind has gone down when Peter wakes me in the leaden-lighted morning. “Roose yersel’ noo,” he says, as he gives me a polite kick. The net is being hauled in ; “fools” flying about with disappointed cries, like the creaking of a sign-post in the wind, and “whales” ploughing through the waters with dorsal fins rising above their furrows. Two men on each quarter are hauling in the net, shaking out as many of the fish as they can before the dank reaches are repiled. A fifth looks after the buoys as they come in from the long line that sinuates astern like a black sea-serpent. Peter is scooping up fish with a pole-net ; one flops into the fireplace, and grills and wriggles, “puir beastie,” with oleaginous odoriferousness into rest. The boat’s floor is paved thick with “caller herrin’,” sliding over one another in a beautiful jumble of silver, sheeny green, glossy blue, gold,

and pink. All over the boat, single herrings shimmer on dark boards and spars and nets and sails, like elongated dew-drops trembling on black brambles. They would be *very* beautiful objects to look at, did not my cheerful friends, alas, begin their curing with saliva. "Hech, I'm glad to see the note-book oot again," says the jocose skipper. "Ye were nae sae keen a awhile sin." Ahead, astern, and on both bows and quarters, the boats that heave on the unfoaming waters are as busy as our own. Some are making for port with all sail up, deep in the water. "Hech, it's the best tak' o' the season," says the skipper. "They've a' had a good shot. Isna that John Vine's boat, Sandie?—He maun hae saxty cran," the skipper sighs. The skipper, however, comforts himself when he glances round upon the prime herring in his own boat, which, at 32s. 6d. the barrel, will bring him in, when cured for the Hamburgh and other Continental markets, at least, some £50.

Both masts are stepped, and up go both our sails; Peter being summoned to officiate at the rough pump, which looks like a magnified popgun. Presently the sweeps are ordered out again—Peter and the Fiddler pull at one, and Peter, I think, does the harder work. The Farmer has an oar to himself, and he pulls it most vigorously, to shame the Fiddler; but the Farmer's time is as eccentric as the Harvard's time became at stages of the race they pulled with *c'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre gallantry*. Sails and sweeps notwithstanding, we get back to, or rather off, the port we left at three p.m. at

ten a.m. We have lost the tide, and have to anchor with all the rest of the fleet, through which a schooner that has come for their cured cargoes tacks restlessly. The net is once more unfolded ; the fish that have stuck in it, like silver spear heads, being very roughly dragged out, if they refuse to come for shaking. Everybody on board is spangled with herring-scales like harlequins. "There's the coffin," the men say, as they point to the mark on the herring's head, which they fancy to be coffin-shaped. "The herin' may weel droon men wi' that on 'em."

A flat-bottomed cobble, pulled by fisher-mannikins, in bronzed and freckled face, and oilskin and tarpaulin dress as like to fishermen as crabkins are to crabs, comes alongside. "Gie us a hand, frien'," says the skipper, as he holds up his legs in turn for me to pull off his oilskin breeches. "We'll ging ashore." He fees our ferryboys (who familiarly inquire "Hoo many cran hae ye, Peter?") with a handful of silver—herring ; and the youngsters pull us inside the almost waterless harbour.

When I have splashed ashore, and scrambled over the ankle-wrenching stones that litter the harbour's bottom, I hear a "Hech ! I was lookin' oot for ye. They'll mak' ye win oot again wi' them the nicht, if ye dinna hae a care. They're a superstetious race, the fushers, an, it's the first lucky nicht o' the fushin'."

Pleasanter fellows than those I went out with I do not wish to meet, but I cannot honestly say that I had any desire to spend a second night with them—so soon—upon

the water. When I had taken mine ease in mine inn, however, I went down to the harbour to have a yarn with my messmates before they went out again. Early in the afternoon as it was, theirs was one of the black sails already blotching the outside waters. The last boat was pulling out as I reached the harbour.



## V I.

### THE NORTHAMPTON SHOEMAKER.

**P**ARLIAMENT never meets now on the banks of the Nene ; the University of Northampton long ago lived out its little day ; but Northampton was famous for its leather manufactures hundreds of years ago, and it is famous for them still. Throughout the good town, indeed, there is a piquant blending of the present and the past. Two railways minister to its wants, and yet a good many of its streets—roadway and footpath alike—are paved with ankle-wrenching round pebbles, and in some places the grass grows green between the stones. (This old-fashioned style of pavement, I am inclined to think, from its effect on my own boot soles, is kept up to foster the local demand for the town's staple manufacture).

Northampton has modern meeting-houses, but it also holds the one in which Dr. Doddridge used to preach. It has a splendid new Town Hall, with polished granite pillars, and sharply cut shields, statues, cornices ; and it

has also remains of the old Norman castle, which the Conqueror's baronial blacksmith built, cropping out of the ground like brown iron-ore. Modern red-brick shoe-factories stud the town ; pleasant red and white brick little private residences, with tiny, trim lawns, dazzlingly spangled with parterres of pœcile bedding-out plants, fringe the town ; and it contains as well quaint old St. Peter's Church, and picturesquely mellowed and mottled brown St. Sepulchre's—one of the four Templar churches still extant in England. In spite of later spire and aisles which have grown on to it, the round model of the Holy Sepulchre still bulges out, plainly perceptible above the green mounded graveyard with almost every weather-stained stone askew.

The soldier who is walking in the tree-shaded church-yard, as meditatively as Hervey (who was educated at the Northampton Grammar School), has 22 upon his cap ; others of the same regiment are lounging in their shirt-sleeves at the open barrack-windows, or strolling into the town in jauntily adjusted white belts and freshly-brushed red shell-jackets. A detachment of the 17th Lancers, billeted in the town *en route* for Edinburgh, are clanking their spurs upon its pavement, superciliously brushing past their shorter infantry brethren ; lolling at tavern doors ; pipe-claying their gauntlets, covering their trencher-topped helmets with newspaper, grooming their horses, and shoeing the Queen's steeds—if Simon de St. Liz, who built the castle, were still alive, *he* would have to get *that* done for them—in old-fashioned tavern yards. These

modern warriors, no doubt, are every bit as brave as fighters of the olden time (did not the 17th devour the ground in the front of the madly magnificent Balaklava charge?); but, seeing them at Northampton, one cannot help letting one's thoughts wander back to the thousands of old-world Englishmen slain hard by in the wars of the Roses.

In Billing Road there is a white Infirmary, founded in 1747; and in St. John's Lane there is a dusky, time-gnawn Hospital of that ilk, founded in 1170. Sheep Street, Cow Lane, are racy names that tell of times when Northampton, like the American Boston, was laid out by cattle. Bearward Street, too, has an old smack about it —thereabouts Bruin used to be baited. Narrow Toe Lane is a title that "talks shop" in a town of shoemakers, and Quart Pot Lane tells of proclivities which the present race of Northampton leather workers have, doubtless, inherited from their far-off ancestors who made the town famous for its leather bottles.

The *Northampton Mercury* was started by Diceys one hundred and fifty years ago, and it is owned by Diceys still. The town crier in red plush waistcoat and breeches, drab gaiters, and gilt-banded hat, who intones with painful conscientiousness like an old-fashioned rector nagged into Ritualism by a domineering curate of advanced views, is not exactly an antique; but he reminds one somehow, when he rings his bell in the diamond paved "Drapery," of the Northampton parish clerk who got Cowper to write verses for his bills of mortality—those obsolescent authorities for Life Assurance.

There is an old-fashioned town fool, also, who is abominably tormented by the youthful snobidæ ; the cruel young scamps varying their amusement by supplying him with ammunition, when they have worked him into a towering rage, to pelt their fellows with.

The dress of the Northampton charity-boys is another thing that strikes a stranger as telling of the past. Here come a couple : one with a waistcoat far redder than a robin's breast blazing out of his blue coat ; the other in knee-breeches, blue swallow-tail, with strawberry-ice-coloured cuffs, and muffin-cap and stockings of the same hue. Charity costumes everywhere seem droll to those not used to them, but this particoloured youngster has a specially comical aspect as he dances along, quite unconscious of the effect which his light-hosed spindle-shanks are producing.

Altogether, St. Crispin's favourite shrine in England is a quaintly piquant place to wander about in. Its old churches and houses of mottled brown and cream-coloured Kingston stone are so oddly blended with two and three and four floored new brick shoe factories, with trim villakins, and new streets running, bramble-blocked, into corn-fields or up to the scarped banks of meadows. Pallid men, stubbly-chinned, and smudged as to the cheeks and apron like a lodging-house slavey blackleading a grate, are loafing about at every corner. Ditto men and boys and untidy women and girls, are "going to shop," with bagfuls and faggots of boots and shoes, and soleless "uppers." The women folk seem to toil along under

the heaviest loads. The Northampton shoemaker, I am told, too often makes his wife his beast of burden. Sometimes he has the good excuse that he can go on working whilst she is carrying his work "to shop;" but he does not always go on working, and the Northampton cordwaineress does not possess the power of the purse, like the far heavier load carrying Scotch fishwife.

Besides those indicated, there are not at first, to a stranger's apprehension, any outward and visible signs of the town's specialty; but he soon gets to understand the meaning of the ubiquitous undertaker-like tap-tapping that he hears almost constantly as he passes along a good many of the streets; he sees shoemakers and shoemakeresses at work in dingy ground-floor rooms and at open upper windows; he notices "Riveters' Entrance," &c., painted on the finger rubbed doors of the many-windowed factories which might be taken for little cotton mills.

Let us apply for permission (sure to be given, very courteously, together with pilotage) to go over one of the largest of these concerns—such, say, as Messrs. Turner Brothers, or Mr. Manfield's, in Campbell Square. The first impression produced is one of the queer contrasts that there are in the cordwainer's trade. The cobbler, cramped in his cupboard-like stall, belongs to it, and so does this firm, which employs four hundred hands on, and four times as many off, the premises. In one long room, five rows of clickers, with pale faces and dirty aprons, with a pent-house or brief upper skirt of leather at the waist, are cutting out on wooden slabs, and blocks

like butchers', all kinds of women's materials ; in another tougher men's materials are being manipulated. When cut, the uppers are rolled up, placed in ticketed baskets, and sent up to operatives in other parts of the premises, or away to outside hands. A boot or shoe often goes out in this way twice before it is finished, and stacked in the drying-room heated by steam-pipes. Down below there is the puff of steam ; wheels whir, bands run round and round, machinery clanks. Soles and heels and "split-lists" are being punched out by iron frames that come down upon the leather with a thud, and when punched, slide down shoots into the bin-like receptacles beneath. These lads are pricking holes for the riveters by the aid of a machine ; that old man is passing leather, to harden it, between steam-turned rollers. It is curious to note the difference between hand-work and machine-work. Close by a sole cutting machine a young man or two are cutting up odds and ends of leather into soles by hand. Although they have the aid of machinery to press the leather on the shape, it is almost ludicrous to remark how few they make in comparison with the machine. Up and down, in and out, we wandered, stumbling over great sheets and rolls of leather. Soles and heels are garnered in great pigeon-holes. Shaped leather of all sorts is arranged on shelves in ticketed baskets—looking like wine waiting for delivery. Cistern-like tin-lined cases, inner-lined with brown paper, are gaping for their loads. Here is a pile of boots done up in pairs in white and green tissue-paper ; there a pyra-

mid of bright pink boxes, each holding a dozen pairs. Yonder there is a heap of dark-green paper knapsacks, banded with red tape, each full of the omnipresent boots and shoes. It wearies one to look at them, packed, stacked everywhere, and drooping in groves of thousands. One feels compelled to walk in fancy the miles that they will traverse with feet in them when scattered all over the world. Here the patent-leather tops of boots for South American gallopers over the Pampas are being eyeleted ; there the same style of boot is being polished on trees that bulge out or collapse at the touch of a treadle. Specially gay and graceful are the women's boots intended for Spanish-American countries ; sky-blue, with a golden star on the instep ; mauve ; golden-bronze, like a butterfly's wing ; green, with a sheen like a drake's neck ; pink, yellow, and black, with coquettish little ankle-tassels. Close by are shoes for New Zealand servant-girls —that look as if their wearers would never need a second pair ; and not far off, as substantial-seeming sea-boots for Newfoundland cod-fishers. In an adjoining room there is an "infinite variety"—a dazzling variety—of many coloured babies' shoes, varying in price from 5d. up to 30s. Shoe-leather seems a queer thing to get sentimental about ; but, surrounded by shoes that are waiting for wearers in all quarters of the globe—for hundreds of dimpled, rosy little feet that have not yet begun to make "mad capers on the mother's lap"—one cannot help feeling a shoe-warehouse to be as solemn, and even sadder, than a churchyard : in the churchyard the trouble

of this life, at any rate, is over ; in the warehouse one thinks of it as still carking, and to come.

"And what is the value of Northampton's export of shoes ? "

"A million sterling per annum would be a low estimate," is the answer.

"And what are the average wages of the hands ? "

"Oh, it is almost impossible to strike an average. Some of mine—a very few—make £3 a week ; more make £2 ; but I dare say a good many do not make more than 12s. It depends entirely upon the man himself."

What I may call a middleman manufacturer—one who takes work from the large manufacturers and employs boys and girls to do it—is good enough to say that, if I like to come, I can look over his place. Although he employs some seventy hands, the middleman wears an apron, and carries work backwards and forwards in a basket on his shoulder. "No," he chuckles, when I ask him whether there have been any strikes lately in Northampton. "We've done striking, I think. The strike against the machines gave us a lesson, I fancy—drove the trade to Leicester and Stafford, and half ruined Northampton. But we're going again now—p'raps trade's a bit slack just at present—but we've got the trade back, and there'll be no more strikes, I reckon." The strike referred to was an epoch in Northampton's history. Waggons were converted into platforms on which indignant orators consigned the machines, verbally, to per-

dition ; those who worked then were hooted through the streets as “scabs ;” but machinery triumphed, and shoe-making still employs the bulk of the labouring population of Northampton.

The middleman’s factory is a three-floored brick building, window-lighted on both sides. On the ground-floor the paste-boys work, earning from 3s. to 4s. a week. The two upper floors are given up to the girls. In each room there is a row of about a dozen “machinists”—young women from seventeen to twenty odd, some of them with chignons like small pumpkins—working “uppers” on Howe and Singer sewing-machines, and earning from 9s. to 18s. a week. The little girls who sit on the floor in the middle of the room, with baskets beside them, are “knot-tiers.” They earn from 1s. 6d. to 3s. by picking out and knotting the ends of the machinists’ threads. At a long dresser-like counter on the other side of the room stand a row of “fitters,” girls of an age intermediate between the machinists and the knot-tiers, and earning the intermediate wages of from 7s. to 12s. a week. The ceaseless ticking of the sewing machines, the pummelling the fitters give the uppers they are fitting to the lasts, and what I must be ungallant enough to call the “clatter,” which is an almost necessary consequence of feminine foregathering, combine to make those upper rooms remind one of the parrot-house in Regent’s Park. The working hours are from seven to twelve a.m. ; and from one to six p.m. Such of the children as come under the Factory Act are sent to school in batches. Here, as well as I believe at

the larger factories, work ceases at two on Saturday afternoons—a boon which the Northampton operatives highly and jealously prize, and the holidays given amount to about four clear days in the year.

In one of the new streets ending abruptly in a little precipice of scarped meadow, the Northampton Industrial Boot and Shoe Manufacturing Society (Limited) has recently built itself a commodious factory. Wandering about in it, I find the manager in red shirt and apron, and with hands that show he does his full share of the factory's work. He leads the way into a little board-room, furnished with a common table and hard wooden-bottomed chairs. The Association plainly means business, and squanders no money on luxuries for directors. It counts one hundred members, sixty of whom work for the factory—ten on the premises. When asked as to the society's success, the manager replies, with a quiet smile, "Our last balance-sheet will be the best answer to that," and produces the document. It shows that goods to the value of about £4,370 have been sold during the half-year (material costing £2,260), and that nearly £1,500 have been paid in wages to members and non-members.

"The nett profits for the half-year amount to £246 2s. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., which the committee of management recommend to be apportioned in the following manner, viz.:—an addition of ten per cent. to the reserve fund, and a bonus of 1s 9d. in the £1 on both capital and wages, after providing for one bad debt, amounting to £27, leaving

a balance of £13 2s. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. to be carried forward to the next account."

The co-operative principle has also been applied to distribution in Northampton, and the stores which have been opened for the sale of groceries, &c., are said to do a very fair business.

A word or two, in conclusion, on the general out-of-business character of the Northampton shoemaker. When thousands of people are concerned, it is almost impossible to draw a typical portrait of the class without giving just offence to hundreds of its members whom the sketch does not merely not flatter, but positively maligns. I will, therefore, not attempt to draw such a portrait. There is many an intelligent, temperate, industrious, frugal, generally moral Northampton shoemaker; but I am afraid there are many more shoemakers in Northampton to whom such attributes could only be ascribed in most satirical irony. Those who make a profession of religion are about equally divided between the Church and Nonconformity. There is a large sprinkling of "Free-thinkers" amongst the shoemakers: some of them sensible, earnest men, whose scepticism is preferable to a good many men's so-called "belief"—sceptics who doubt because they love the Truth, instead of professing to believe because they are too lazy to trouble themselves as to what they say they believe. But others, unfairly slumped in the same class with those just described, are shallow pated, blatant coxcombs, who love the sound of their own voice, more especially when it is saying something

which they think will wound the feelings of those who are generally considered more reputable members of society than themselves. These empty parroters of exploded sneers at religion sometimes get put down amusingly by orthodox members of their own order when elocutionising *al fresco*. Northampton has what may be called two public parks, looking out upon the green grassland, golden cornfields, dusky wood, and winding water, with which the slope of the red, yellow, brown, white town, here and there bristled with tall chimney stalks, is begirt. These are the rough race-course, sacred to the Pytchley Hunt performances in race-time ; during the rest of the year given up to cows, kite-fliers, cricketers, and strollers ; and the Cow Meadow, bordered on one side by the locked cut, which renders the Nene navigable there for its long, low, slow, man-poled, woman-steered barges, and on the other two sides of the irregular triangle, by a most pleasant Alameda of over-arching trees, known as the New Walk, or Victoria Promenade. In both these recreation-grounds there are benches, and on these the aforesaid blatant bodies are fond of perching themselves on Sundays, and spouting out their second-hand, seventieth hand, "scepticism," until extinguished by the aforesaid orthodox.

My previous protest against type-sounding being borne in mind, I must, however, say that if I were cornered, and compelled to state my candid opinion as to the "religion" of a very large section of the Northampton shoemakers, I should be forced to follow the example of the English tourist, who put down under that head in a

continental travellers' book (with honestly veridicent personal reference) "Beer." A large proportion of the Northampton shoemakers struck me, during my recent visit to them, as being decided members of the Alcoholic Persuasion. I met them mooning about, unshorn, unkempt—a condition in which too many of them remain on the day on which they need not work—with filthy eyes, which showed that they had gone, in their own more expressive than elegant or euphonious phrase, upon "the fuddle." I met them staggering, "looking as wise as owls." I met them capering far more idiotically than the town-idiot. I saw them sparring—one with his apron down, and the other with his apron hastily rolled up around his waist—and then suddenly knocking off knocking each other, amicably nodding their heads together, as if they had quite forgotten that they had been trying to blacken each other's eyes, and give each other a bloody nose, two seconds before. I saw them embracing a lamp-post with one arm, holding a beer-mug in the other hand, and gazing into futurity and the opposite gutter, with faces utterly discharged of all expression except blankly *blasé* indifference, at rare intervals varied by a sluggish streak—like a flash of forked lightning modelled in dough or putty—of deep depression. It is, I am informed, "the thing" with the Northampton shoemaker to take what he calls a "Sunday-Monday :" *id est*, he works on Sunday, that he may have the more to "lush on" on Monday.

Bearward Street, already mentioned ; Harding Street ;

Spring Lane, with stagnant duck-weeded water at its foot ; Compton Street, the very unaristocratic namesake of the local earl ; Scarletwell Street, so called because its well used to be supposed to supply water peculiarly adapted for scarlet-dyeing (never touching the local lymph, a good many of the residents in the neighbourhood manage to dye their faces scarlet) ; and Crispin Street, are the most fashionable quarters of the cordwainers' colony, a part of the town which is almost solely peopled by shoemakers and their purveyors. Neatly built, but yet squalid, unfragrant, two-floored cottages ; roadways splashed with slops, and littered with garbage ; dirty children quarrelling, grubbing in the dirt, racing, squealing, squatting on the kerbstone in rows like roosting, draggle-tailed fowls ; vixenish women and beery men, in and outside of low "publics," are the salient features of Snobopolis.

In one of its streets I saw a fierce young mother box her own child's ears savagely for dabbling in the mire, and then pursue and savagely drub the neighbour's child who had tempted her offspring to dabble. The neighbour's child stretched out his little legs as if he wanted to split himself when he saw his chubby playmate stuffing his dirty fists into his smeared eye-sockets ; the neighbour's child had a dolefully prescient look as he did his poor little best to escape from the offended Fury, and he soon blubbered in sympathy with his playmate beneath the Fury's breath-expelling smacks.

"There, you" (something or other) "little *snob*," exclaimed the snob's wife—just as negroes call one

another condemned niggers—when she was out of breath herself, “you come an’ take my Bill down into the muck agin, will yer ?”

In Scarletwell Street “St. Crispin’s Arms” draw in a nearly unintermittent throng of St. Crispinites, and just opposite stands the equally patronised “Gate,” with this inscription on its sign :—

“ This gate hangs well, and hinders none,  
Refresh, and pay, and travel on.”

A Mercurial Northamptonian suggests that the second line of the couplet ought to be parodied into

“ Be fresh, and pay, and still stop on.”



## VII.

### THE TYNESIDE COLLIER.

JOHN WESLEY writes of Newcastle, “Certainly if I did not believe there was another world, I would spend all my summers here, as I know no place in Great Britain comparable to it for pleasantness.” Even a hundred years ago that must have been somewhat exaggerated praise for “canny” but still coaly Newcastle; and nowadays—so far, at least, as atmosphere is concerned—a stranger, verily, is not likely to be reminded of *heaven* by the smoke-canopied town. And yet, in spite of the multitudinously malodorous murk that overbroods the town and neighbourhood, an artist in search of the picturesque might go further than Newcastle, and fare a good deal worse. No stranger can help being interested when he turns into its “chares”—narrower than Yarmouth “rows”—or dives down steep staircases swooping in stages from the high ground to the river-side—here and there through groves of

dangling boots and shoes—like water-worn chasms in sea-cliffs. The rectangular, dingy bonded warehouses at the bottom lose their prosaic look, with the feet of those steep staircases peeping out between their lofty walls.

Ancient and modern Newcastle come into very sharp and piquant contrast hard by the elliptical railway arch. St. Nicholas's flying-buttressed steeple is incongruously grafted on the arch, and the bulging old houses of the Side and Sandhill look like jolly old burghers lounging in dingy shirt-sleeves, with modern swells superciliously scrutinising them through their eye-glasses, in juxtaposition with the prim plate-glassed piles of offices the expansion of the town's trade has caused to be their neighbours. On the Sandhill the Newcastle mob would have murdered John Wesley, had not one of the Newcastle fishwives affectionately embraced the diminutive but dauntless evangelist, brandishing meanwhile the clenched, disengaged moiety of her "ten commandments," and exclaiming, defiantly, "Touch the little mon noo, if ye dau'ah!" In Sandgate, writes Wesley, "after preaching, the poor people were ready to tread me under foot, out of pure love and kindness." In the Newcastle shops I saw the photographs of modern Methodist ministers exposed for sale, in groups, with a frequency and a prominence that showed they must be popular favourites.

In Wesley's time Sandgate was colonised by keelmen; but the keelmen have now largely exodised from the

Sandgate, and, though there are still keels upon the Tyne, steam-lighters, and the gaunt black jetties along the river-side that shoot coal sheer into the ship's hold, have relegated the Tyne keels into comparative insignificance.

The bridge beneath the high-level railway-line is not a place to lounge on, if you want fresh air. High as it is, its air seems putridly stagnant, and when a whiff comes from the river it chokes you with coal-smoke, or nauseates you with cloacinal odours. But listening to the trains thundering overhead, looking up and down the dirty, smoky river, hemmed in on both banks with filthy but wealth-coining piles of building, you may get a vivid idea of the important part the "Newcastle Collier" plays in our complex "civilisation." Let us thread our way through the bustling throngs and landed cargo that obstruct the miry, craft-fringed quayside, and take a run down the river in one of its host of steamboats, to get a more detailed notion of the power of Newcastle coal.

As the boat's paddles begin to churn up the Stygian waters, a shrill scream is heard, and a line of coal-trucks, dwindled to a toy-train by the height, rushes across the high-level bridge. The deck and seats of the boat have recently been swabbed down, but she is past washing—the grime of many a yesterday shows plain beneath the wet. Very few of the craft she passes, however, can sneer at her as a sloven. Some of them are so sooty, that a rusty anchor at the bow glows like a sun-flower. It is hard to believe your neighbour when he points to a

mud-coloured boat towing a net, and tells you that the mud-coloured man who is pulling it is a salmon-fisher, adding, "There's a vast o' salmon caught in Tyne."

Announcing its arrival at its various stopping-places by a trumpet-blast from its engine, aided by a stentorian shout of "Get oot here for Low Felling!" (or whatever the place may be), the steamboat splashes seawards; but for miles both banks are lined continuously with proofs of the wage-giving, wealth-making value of Northumbrian and Durham coal. A jumble of smoke-dried brick and stone works, of new brick works fast blackening, of huge sheds, of colliery staiths rattling black avalanches of coal down hinged shoots, or dropping coal-trucks from a giddy height through traps, rises above the shipping on either hand. Cranes swing, yellow water cascades into the river, fire glows, steam-engines send out angry white puffs, chimney-stalks pour out black coils, machinery clanks, tools rattle, with a ceaseless, savage energy that would drive a Neapolitan mad. So vast and varied is the amount of labour which coal has crowded on the banks of this wonderful river that a mere visitor is inclined to blush—feels as if he must take off his coat, and set to work at something. There are those grim, gigantic staiths—Walker, Wallsend, Willington, and the rest of them—looking like black skeletons of monsters seen in night-mare; there are foundries, fort-like blast-furnaces, torrid puddling forges, whirring, rattling rolling-mills, chain and anchor works; lead works, copper works; plump-coned glass-works and potteries; chemical

works exhaling their poisonous fumes from *Wellingtonia gigantea* chimney-stalks (whose height seems otiose in such an atmosphere) ; fetid manure works, grindstone wharfs, saw mills, oil mills ; cement works, advertising "chalk wanted" on great boards ; brick works, coke ovens ; patent slips, iron and wooden shipbuilding yards, graving docks, timber docks, and docks crammed with shipping. In the stream lower down lies a crowd of shipping, of every build and flag, about to start to all parts of the world with the Tyne's black diamonds. In very busy times you might almost walk from South to North Shields on the decks of the intervening vessels.

The smoke and the hubbub of the river-side overlap a good way into the country ; but where you can see the colour of the sky, and even hear a bird singing, and you begin to fancy that you have escaped the coal-trucks for awhile, the ear catches a low monotonous whirring ; and, looking over a hedge, you see another of the straight narrow colliery tramways ruled through the landscape like a line of ink, with the chain of its stationary engine running over the friction-polished wheels in the middle of the single line of metals. The dust of the lanes is like the dust of a foundry, and the hedges are powdered with it as if they had been dredged with pepper. Hundreds of men are working for miles beneath your feet. You are walking over a huge human ant-hill.

Here is a little village that would look rural but for the omnipresent smut. It has an old-fashioned little bridge spanning a little stream, in which ducks are paddling ; an

old church surrounded by old tombstones ; a manor-house, or a rectory, standing back behind the grass and trees ; old-fashioned stone cottages in little sloping gardens ; and an old-fashioned public-house. But the dirty ducks are washing in vain in a dirty stream beneath a dirty bridge ; the church and its tombstones are both streaked with smoke instead of lichen ; and the grass and the trees look as if their pores were clogged with coal-dust.

The landlady of the little inn, when asked what wages her collier-customers get, answers confidently, " Some £5 a fortnight—some £4—some, maybe, six-and-forty shillings." When this statement is quoted below ground, the man to whom it is quoted shakes his head, laughs, glances slyly in the dim lamplight at his fellows, and informs them, in an amused tone, "*He* says we mak' five poonds a fortnight !" They seem as amused as he is, but still they will not " condescend to particulars " of what they *do* get. Perhaps it will not be unfair to estimate the average earnings of the adult north-country miners at a little below the mean between the landlady's two extremes. No one can say that the remuneration is too high for work so dangerous, disagreeable, and laborious as theirs ; but one is inclined to wonder that, getting such wages, they can be content with dwellings so (outwardly) squalid as the majority of the cottages they tenant. Most of these rows of gardenless hovels are dreary-looking barracks, as pleasing to the eye as so many bars of dusky mottled soap, though far less suggestive of cleanliness.

Some are of red brick, some have a tiny window, like a pigeon-hole, squeezed into their dingily whitewashed walls between their shuttered lower windows and the eaves of their tiled roofs. Here is a little colony that may, perhaps, be taken as a fair type of north-country collier's homes. A row of rough-stoned, tiled cottages, most of them one-storied, stretches along the dusty road. Another row or two of *fassimilia* are ruled along the dustier waste ground behind. In the background tower black, belching chimney-stalks that look like burning tree-trunks. The numbers of the cottages are chalked upon the doors. A row of dwarf palings runs in front of each, festooned with flannel jackets and breeches hung out to dry, after having been, apparently, rinsed in ink. Ducks that look as if they had been used, as geese were once, for sweeping chimneys, are trying to squeeze in between the dusty palings. Each cottage has a portly covered water-but<sup>t</sup>, fed through a square slanting little wooden water-pipe ; and though, in spite of the covers to the butts, the water in them cannot be of the purest, good purifying use is made of it inside a good many of the cottages. Some of them are almost choked with furniture—brass-handled and brass-mounted chests of drawers and such-like. The cottages do not *all* tell of house-wifery.

The handsome new schoolhouses that may be seen in the very midst of the rude collier homes are satisfactorily salient characteristics of the district. Its collier children of a generation back would never have dreamt

of "playing at school;" but on a patch of road-side grass, that looked very much like a mangy, dusty door-mat, I found a group of little collier-lasses so employed.

And now for a stroll in the under-world. Here is a pit employing five hundred men and boys, and a hundred horses and ponies, below ground. Leave to descend is asked of the "viewer," and granted readily enough, so far as he is concerned, but the "overman" is supreme in the under-world, and therefore he has next to be hunted up. The overman is in bed—he is fagged with yesterday's work, and to-day he will have to pay the men—colliers' pays in the north being fortnightly "and a week on." The overman, however, is a very good-natured Pluto, and, as soon as he is aroused from slumber, sends to summon an efficient Mercury for the visitor who has so unceremoniously disturbed his sleep; and sends out also the key of his office, that I may make use of it as a dressing-room. By the time my pit-toilette is completed, Mercury makes his appearance; a civil, short, square-shouldered "deputy," attired in flannel hip-jacket and knee-breeches, and blue-worsted ribbed stockings. He carries a safety-lamp. He has a pleasant, half-washed, thickly-moustached face, and a chronic cold in his head which makes him talk as if the coal-dust he has inhaled for half a century were clogging up his throat. We mount a magnified hen's ladder, and come out upon the coal-dusty platform of a tarred weather-board *annexe* to the engine-house. A timber-laden "bogie" almost runs over us, as its propelling boys butt at it. Up comes the cage with a

jarring clash. Laden coal "tubs" are run off it. Empty tubs are run on to its two lower stories, and we take our places, crouching on the third floor. Down we drop through the damp darkness for nearly a quarter of a mile. My guide, as he leads the way, speaks of the different members of the carbonaceous circle, into whose midst we descend at the foot of the "downcast," as this or that "gentleman." We enter the overman's cabin, a grotto hewn out of the coal, with benches running round its walls, and lamps and a barometer and thermometer hanging upon them. The deputy takes down two oil-lamps, lights them, and, when he thinks that I have sufficiently rested, proposes to start upon our ramble. I have explained to him that I have been down a mine before, but when he learns that it was an "iron-stone pit," he is only half-satisfied with such previous mining experience. Men are working in *his* pit two miles from the pit's mouth, and we have a walk of more than two miles, "there and back," before us.

"Sight-seers" sometimes go down coal-pits for the "fun of the thing." If their coal-cellars at home be at all damp and low-roofed, they might have got as much "fun" by lighting candles and groping about for an hour or two over their own coals, as they are likely to get by exploring the hollows from which those coals are hewn. It does not foster the sense of personal dignity to get a knock on the head every two or three minutes from a projecting knob in the ceilings of corridors through which one is floundering with spine almost at right angles with

the legs, and to have one's hat sent down like an extinguisher upon one's lamp. When, in response to a shout of, "I say, old fellow, my light is out," the guide ahead turns round to look after his charge, it may be temporarily pleasant to follow his friendly advice to sit down and rest in a mixture of moistened emery-powder and liquid blacking, with head resting on a pillow that turns streaming perspiration into Indian ink ; but, subsequently, that is not a position which any one who plumes himself on his walking powers is likely to look back upon with pride. When five-foot-three Guide comforts his taller Charge with an assurance that "*we*" are soon coming to a passage in which "*we*" can stand upright, how can Charge—however much he may respect him otherwise—help thinking Guide a tantalizing humbug, when he sees Guide's head, in the promised pleasant places, as upright as an onion's, whilst his own has still to hang like a bulrush's? The mine stables are the first mine-show my guide conducts me to. Of course they are very dark, but they are also very cosy, and the horses champing their fodder in their cavern-mangers are plumper than a great many of their brethren above ground—far worse housed. I make this remark to my guide, and he repeats it to the overman when we get above ground again, as if he were proud, not only of the fact, but also of having been in the company of a person capable of making so strikingly original an observation. At different halting-places throughout the mine, hay lies ready for the horses and ponies. In one of the mangers so stored we find a youthful driver of

a tub-train sound asleep. The deputy flashes lamplight in his smutty face ; the grimy boy, half-naked above the waist, wakes up with a start. He listens, with decorous bewilderment, to the official wigging he receives, and then, as soon as we have passed, drops back his heavy head upon his couch of hay. Boys in the mine get 1s. 3d. a-day, and have to work for twelve hours—the men working for eight.

As we pass along the back-crooking, tram-lined thoroughfares, we are often stopped by trains of Lilliputian trucks. A distant rumbling is heard—a light is coming towards us—a shout is raised when our lights are seen—and, as we jump from the roadway and crouch in angular hollows at its side, the train rumbles past ; its half-naked driver whistling blithely, because the breeze that is blowing from the downcast on our unappreciative backs is blowing refreshingly full in his face. At other times we come upon standing trains, and have to lean over on them as we grope along, to avoid getting up to our knees in peasoupy ponds. My guide has been pointing out, for my scientific edification, the "flaws," "troubles," "dips" of the coal-seam, and ribbony "bands of iron-stone" in the walls we pass. He has been showing me the "splint" which entails a fine of 3d. per tub on the miner who sends a tub so adulterated up to bank. He has been distinguishing the props, some of which are broken or bending, that support the ceiling of the corridor—Norway fir, he says, in proportion to size, is about twice as strong as Scotch. He has proudly pointed out,

for my artistic admiration, the capital letters and grotesque caricatures which the pit-boys have chalked on smooth surfaces of the outcropping rock. But the artists in charge of the halted trains have a keen eye to business. With a frequency which would empty one's pockets if generally complied with, they exclaim—in a tone *crescendo* in emphasis, but the opposite in politeness—"Pay yer footin', sir," "Pay yer footin'," "Footin', footin', footin'!" as we splash on into the further darkness. Ever and anon, as we stumble over the rough sleepers of the tramway, we have to lift up a canvas curtain, push open a swing-door, or have a door swung open for us by the grimy urchin who crouches beside it in the dark. These aids to ventilation are commonplace-looking enough, but the lives of hundreds depend upon the free action of their hinges. A door propped back against the wall, or so hung as to be able to stand open of itself, might turn the mine into a furnace-prison.

Every now and then a muffled little boom is heard—the report of a collier's "shot." To see how the work is done, we halt beside a tall stalwart young fellow, who, my guide tells me, has been a soldier. Another brawny fellow, engaged in putting up fresh timber props hard by, is chaffing the ex-soldier on his former occupation. "Hoo manny times ought ye to be hung, George?" the pit-wit asks—"hoo manny lads hae ye kilt? Ye'd rather be here than in the army, wouldn't ye, George?" "Ay," answers George; and, as he shifts his lamp, its light shows a broad corroborative grin upon his damp, dark

face ; but George has no time to waste on repartee. He shovels the loose coal his last shot brought down into the tub that is waiting for it, as if he had staked his life on a shovelling match against time. (The colliers are paid per score of tubs, each man's being distinguished by his "token." Then George takes up his pick again, and swings it like a crusader battle-axing Paynims, as he makes a ledge in the coal-face in front of him in readiness for his next blast. As the small coal rattles down, it crackles like damp firewood. George bores a hole, rams in his cartridge, sprinkles water from his ship's block-shaped canteen upon some coal-dust, rams *that* in, and then puts a lighted quick match into the hole. We shelter close by, behind some timber. In a minute the dull boom is heard. When we scramble out George is already shovelling the loosened coal into his tub. Where George is working he has a flawless seam of splintless coal to operate upon, and he can *almost* stand upright whilst he operates upon it. Therefore, remembering the cramped positions in which he has been obliged to work, and the comparative poorness of the results of previous toil, George acknowledges by a grateful grunt that he does think the lines have at last fallen unto him in pleasant places.

The wit is a reading man, and finding that I am something in the writing line, he proceeds to remark on the false statements which he says he has often found—at first to his astonishment—in print. "You've read Joyce's 'Scientific Dialogues,' lad? Noo, *Joyce* says that ye

can see the stars at daytime, if ye look up from the bowels o' the earth. Ah've tried many a time, but ah never could."

The backsheesh cravers still shout "Footin', footin'," as we re-enter the cage; the cry rings up the shaft after us. When, black as a crow, and blinking like an owl, I re-enter the overman's cottage, it looks so clean with its freshly washed floor, and he looks so clean with his freshly shaven chin and in his freshly ironed shirt, that I feel inclined to back out again. He insists, however, on my coming in and washing my face and hands in presence of his family, one or other of whom is good enough to supply me with basinful after basinful of fresh water, after carrying away a basinful of turbid ink. On the wall of the office in which I resume the garb of those who walk and work in upper day, hangs a copy of the "General and Special Rules of Harton Colliery." The wages are to be paid at the office, "such office not being contiguous to any house where spirits, wine, beer, or other spirituous liquors are sold." No swearing or fighting is to be allowed in the pit. The regulations as to ventilation; the use of open and safety lamps; the examination of "goaves" and "juds;" the consultation of thermometers, barometers, and anemometers, the inspection and management of machinery, etc., etc., all seem as complete as experience-sharpened wit can make them; but, reading that complete code, one cannot help fancying that the grim Death who haunts coal pits is reading it over one's shoulder with a sneering self-satisfied grin. Rules may

be excellent, but who can be sure that they will be obeyed? And even if obeyed, they still leave a terribly wide margin for "chance" to play its fatal freaks in. Flood, fire-damp, choke-damp, *will* burst and creep out in spite of all precautions; and metal that looks as if it would last for ever suddenly snaps like sealing-wax. Not far off, ~~on~~ the other side of the river, is the New Hartley Colliery. Its men, wearily cheerful, were being drawn up from work one winter morning when the huge beam of the pumping-engine snapped in two. Down the shaft thundered one half, crushing the cage that was coming up, ploughing off timber, earth, and stone from the shaft's sides, and piling them into a vault above tenscore men and boys; whilst meanwhile the filthy floods, which the disabled pumping engine had let loose, rushed out ragingly eager to drown the buried-alive like cornered rats in a flushed sewer.

Some years ago it was calculated that for every 100,000 tons of coal sent up to bank in England one collier's life was lost. If the accident average had been struck during the last two years, it would, I think, have been considerably higher. Any reader of a newspaper must have been startled by the recent frequency of colliery explosions, &c. The colliers, no doubt, are often to blame. "Anything that a man hath," we are told, "he will give for his life," but a collier frequently will not give up the tobacco-pipe, that may bring death on scores of his fellows as well as himself; for the sake of a little more illumination, too, he will use a naked light, although carefully provided with

an improved "safety-lamp. There is a large amount of recklessness amongst colliers below ground, and it sometimes still breaks out in brutal behaviour above ground ; but the average collier is no longer the savage he was in Wesley's time, and in the later times in which careless "Society" still disgraced itself by allowing half-naked women and girls to take the place of beasts of burden in the pits that feed its fires. The pitmen are still rough, but most of them now will behave decently towards any one who will behave decently towards them ; and amongst them there are very many who are not merely honest and "respectable," but genuinely "God-fearing" men. Their piety may not be of the type that flourisheth in soft-cushioned places of worship—they hear, unshocked, language which would horrify the daintily-clad worshippers who sit upon those seats ; but they have a real faith in the God before whose judgment-seat they may be suddenly called at any moment of their regular employment, that might be edifying to some of the easy-going religionists whose ears polite would be harrowed by the coarse language which provokes no comment from those pious colliers.



## VII.

### THE DORSETSHIRE DRUDGE.

**D**ES zur, I know that Darset have a bad name, but there's wuss off than us."

So spake a buxom Dorsetshire woman, who certainly looked as if *she* had no reason to complain of the flesh-and-bone-forming capacities of her native county ; but then this ruddy, Junonian rustic was not a labourer's wife. "A good few wuss off," she added, using what I had previously supposed to be a pure or impure Scotticism, but which I found to be a common phrase in "Darset." It was more astonishing to hear her remark echoed by Dorsetshire women and men who *were* labourers, and very lean, languid-eyed labourers, too. Not but what they were ready enough to complain of the hardness of their lot ; still they seemed to consider it a salve for their self-respect to believe that there were people who earned lower wages than they earned, and had less to eat than they had. "They'd heard zay there was great distress in Lon'on," and when,

in reply, I told them of East-End suffering, they nodded their heads as who should say, "There, I knowed it—we be better off than them Lon'oniess, after all." It is a small mercy to be grateful for, and I cannot help thinking that sluggish resignation of this kind is no virtue—but a pathetic proof that those who manifest it are the under-fed offspring of under-fed ancestors. "They haven't *the heart to*," was the unconsciously forcible answer of an old man whom I had asked why Dorsetshire labourers, if dissatisfied with their pay, did not go where they could get better. I asked the same old man what were the favourite games in Dorsetshire. The question seemed to amuse him. "There's no *games* here," he said. "There used to be four-corners and nine-pins, but them's put down. No, and there's no wrestling."

"There's no nothing here," scornfully interjected a young man who had come for a holiday to his native county, after a four years' absence from it. He was one who *had* plucked up courage to try his fortune elsewhere, and his well-filled face and form, his smart satin neck-scarf, his neat pilot-jacket, and his mother-of-pearl-buttoned new waistcoat, and trousers of white corduroy, enabled him to give himself very harmless little airs of superiority to stay-at-home fellow-countymen of his class. Of course, some of these are hale and hearty fellows, but it is impossible for the most superficial observer to avoid noticing the generally feeble, depressed, and ill-clad look of the Dorsetshire peasantry. The blue waggons with their yellow tail-boards, the plump horses jangling their bells

as they toss their heads, adorned with particoloured shaving-brushes, suggest prosperity, as they tramp and grind along the lanes littered with brown, sodden beech leaves ; but the carter who plods beside his team is often a pale, stooping man who turns out his toes as extravagantly as a theatrical clown turns *his* in. The carter's ragged-brimmed Jim Crow, his faded smock or rusty-brown coat, his chafed muddy buckskins reaching to mid-thigh, are a very different costume from the spruce attire of the young fellow I just now described. Sometimes the carter is a thin-faced mite of a boy, who gnaws a dry crust as he sits on the shaft with his collar up to keep off the wind and rain. The train that brought me back from Dorsetshire was tailed with high-piled truck-loads of glossy-green and glowing-red "Christmas;" "it seemed to a fanciful mind" almost a sin to bring the gay branches away from a county whose toilers and moilers have so little else to brighten "the festive season."

Nearly a million sheep feed on the Dorsetshire hills—the "early lambs" that are brought up for the London market "nosing the mother's udder" even in December ; in every London provision-shop may be seen what, at any rate, *calls* itself "Dorset butter ;" Dorsetshire is one of London's chief feeders, and yet it is the county in which England's humble food-producers are most poorly paid. That this *is* the case of Dorsetshire, whatever Dorsetshire people, rich or poor, may say to the contrary, locally disinterested judgment cannot, I think, dispute. Here is one fact that goes far to prove the case. Education is

probably prized by the Dorsetshire peasantry as highly as it is by the peasantry of the majority of English counties ; but Dorsetshire is the county in which agricultural labourers' sons are soonest removed from school. Why ? Because Dorsetshire hinds are so poor that every half-penny is a matter of serious importance to them.

Figures without a background of landscape, to me, have an unsubstantial, wraith-like look. Before proceeding to details of agricultural life in Dorsetshire, therefore, I will endeavour to give a little notion of the scenes in which the life is led. The county disputes with Kent and the Isle of Wight the right to the title of "The Garden of England." It certainly is not a Garden of Eden to its tillers. It has rich tracts of land, and picturesque prospects of land both fertile and comparatively barren, but the latter, I think, forms too large a proportion of its soil to justify its "garden" claim. Flat sand and furze are the amenities of Poole's vicinity. You pass dismal flooded swamps on your journey from Wimborne to Salisbury. The country about neat, avenue-begirt little Dorchester is not garden-like in its character. On one side you pass along a hedgeless road, marked off by trees, mossed in capricious patches, whose bare arms toss and wail, and roar, sea-like, beneath the rough sea-wind that rushes through them. On either hand are brown ploughed lands stretching away to treeless green hills, with hedgeless, treeless cart-tracks running through them, and nothing but your road, and railway cuttings, and the sea-wind to show that the

plains and the hills do not spread and undulate on for ever. On the other side of the town you come upon hedges, and white-smocked, brown-gauntleted men “plashing” them ; lodge-gates with eagles on their piers, and park-land dotted with white sheep ; a hoary old church asleep in the midst of its inky yews, grey tombstones, and memorial-crosses ; and tree-lined, cress-choked watercourses ; but you see also chalk-pits gaping in the middle of green pasture and brown ploughed land, fences of wooden bars and rusty iron wire and hoop, stunted firs, downs almost covered with dark gorse sparsely sprinkled with still golden blossom, and sullen pools, whose withered reeds, bulrushes, and water-flags shudder and sway, and whose black surface turns grey, and whirls away in spray when the boisterous sou'-wester suddenly swoops down into their hollows.

Lonely-looking farmhouses, lonely-looking public-houses—the lonelier the worse in repute—and very lonely-looking cottages are scattered about the country. They cluster round its quaint little towns, in which people seem to go to bed about nine o'clock P.M., and cluster into its still quieter villages and hamlets. Some of the Dorsetshire farms are large, running up to 1,500 or 1,600 acres ; some are considerably less than an eighth of that extent, the labourers being best paid on the largest farms. But the little farmsteads have the more picturesque look. The barn and the cart-lodges walled on one side with furze, join on to the dwelling-house, whose equally sodden thatch on roof and porch is

equally patched with masses of green-velvety moss that glow like square yards of emerald in the sunshine. The tops of the dripping yellow-lichened farmyard-walls are thatched in Dorsetshire. When the thatcher is patching a black-brown or green-mossed roof with fresh yellow straw, the harmonious contrast of colour—if I may venture on a seeming paradox—would voluptuously titillate a water-colour painter's eye. In the farmyards the black, and brown, and yellow, and grey-green ricks and stacks seem to be snuggling together for mutual protection when the fierce sou'-wester rushes by. Some of the oblong corn-ricks are *so* long that they look, in comparison with ordinary ricks, like double, or treble, quatern loaves set down beside half-quatern.

The cottages also have a picturesque look, the few comfortable ones, with trim slated porch and roof, or neatly cut and combed dry thatch, being the last that would catch an artist's eye, and the first that he would wish to live in. Some of the cottages are of stone, a few of new-red brick, more of vitrified brick that looks glazed with petrified snail-tracks, a great many of mud, white-washed, or *au naturel*; most of them heavily wigged with thatch, with here and there lush ivy drooping from the gables. Many have little gardens. A few have little orchards, in which grey-lichened fruit-trees stretch their crooked boughs over the grey, brown, bay, or black pony that is cropping the short winter-grass. In spite of the general poverty of the Dorsetshire peasantry, some of them are “people of property.” “Are you his heir,

John?" I heard a good-tempered clergyman ask of a labourer who was digging in his garden. "Your uncle keeps pigs, and a cow, and a horse and trap, doesn't he? —quite a man of means, eh, John?" Blushing, grinning John corroborated his master's statement as to his uncle's "means," but seemed to be rather doubtful as to his inheritance of them. John, I may add, had once been a navvy, earning 25s. a week, but he preferred the 12s. a week he got from his clerical master in his native county. 12s. a week, to be sure, are exceptional wages there. "If a farmer gives 10s., he thinks himself a liberal gentleman," said one of my peasant friends.

As a rule, the worst cottages in Dorsetshire are those run up by tenants who have a life-interest in them, or by small freeholders, who want to make as much out of as little as they can. There are as good cottages on some Dorsetshire estates as can be found in any part of the kingdom; but, as a whole, its cottage "accommodation" is bad. It is not merely because a good many of the cottages are built of mud or "ceobb." That material, especially when unwhitewashed, has a very uncomfortable *look*, but *well-built* mud cottages are said to be at least *as* comfortable as those of far dearer wood and brick-and-flint. It is the scarcity of cottages in proportion to the population to be housed, and their pigsty-like lack of provision for cleanliness and decency, that make the "peasant's nest" in Dorsetshire far too often a filthy one both physically and morally. There is an outlying hamlet of Dorchester in which virulent epidemics have

almost become endemics, owing to the dirty little holes into which its poor inhabitants are crowded. About one hundred years ago, when a new road was made there, two hundred skeletons were found lying a few feet below the ground. Now-a-days, when you have seen the damp, dark, dirty cabins into which the poor of Fordington are crammed, you marvel that as many corpses are not ever and anon found above ground there. Dr. Aldridge, in his painfully interesting paper on "Agricultural Hygiene," speaks thus of the place :—"Fordington has been a hot-bed for the generation of the most frightful phases of disease. Cholera, small-pox, typhus, and typhoid fevers have many times almost decimated the parish in consequence of the filthy and wretched dwellings of the poor." In this hamlet a short time ago two men, one of them an invalid, a woman, and five children were living in a two-roomed cottage—rooms 14 feet by 8—let at 2s. 6d. a week. It had no garden, opening instead upon a sloping farmyard, whose drainage, of course, dribbled down to its backdoor. In some of the Dorsetshire cottages the windows will not open. Some have only one "necessary" common to half-a-dozen tenements. I will report here a conversation I had with the tenant's wife in a cottage near Wimborne. I select it because I think it will give a tolerably fair idea of the average condition of the Dorsetshire hind. The woman was too ill to work, but, *per contra*, she had no brood of young children, and was kindly looked after by the clergyman of her parish—the one who was selected by John Cross as

trustee of the money subscribed for him after he had been prosecuted for stealing a rotten old hurdle to warm his family of nine children.

The cottage to which I refer consisted of two little rooms. The lower was unevenly paved with worn brick. It held five chairs, one horse-hair-bottomed, and brass-nailed, and professing to be mahogany; a bare deal table, another, or a box, covered with chapped oil-cloth; a zinc pail, a black iron pot, and one or two other cooking utensils; a little crockery and three cheapest candlesticks on the mantel-piece above the almost dead turf fire; and a couple of what looked like "samplers," and a print or two of the same size, half-a-dozen little "pictures," a slate, and a handless clock face hung against the walls. A broker probably would not have given 10s. for the lot of furniture, useful and ornamental, so dim, crazy, and waifish did it look. I asked if I might go up into the bedroom. "Oh yes, sir, if you like," said the poor woman, "but you must excuse the beds not being made—I'm so ailin'." A couple of steps up the cramped corkscrew wooden stairs brought my head above the level of the bed-room floor. The room, unlike the one below, was roughly papered, and matted with fragments of damp rotten carpet. It held two bedsteads, almost touching each other—bedsteads whose incumbents would not have been oppressed by more blankets than I could discover.

When I first went into the cottage, its mistress was nursing a neighbour's little girl that chirped as merrily as

a little bird. Curiosity soon bringing the neighbour in, her child was sent home with her, and then the invalid began to stitch again at the ragged dress lying on her lightened lap—crumpled, without much damage being done, by the neighbour's child's nestlings and capers—and, in reply to my questions, gave me the following details:—"No, sir, this ain't my child." [ "This" was a merry, though stupid-looking, snub-nosed boy of ten or eleven, blowing a pea with a pin stuck through it out of a bit of pipe-stem.] "He's my sister's misfortun', and so his father gives me 1s. 6d. a week for his keep, but he costs me a deal more than that. I send him to school. Mr. O—— says that the master ought to have 2d. a week for him, but I begged hard, and so Mr. O—— lets him go for a penny. He's a kind gentleman is Mr. O——, and I'm glad he's building a parsonage here. We wanted a gentleman here. He gives me porter, and he'd give me port-wine, but I like the porter better. Twopence a-week we pay for our boy. He's fourteen, and he ought to be at work, but he's weakly. I was in the decline when I bred him. A chamber-full of blood I've brought up, and now I've swellings in my thighs. He'd do well at school, if I hadn't to keep him at home every other day, and so he half forgets what he's learnt. I used to go out workin' when I could, pullin' swedes and mangel, and such, and haymakin', and I'd go to barn and help tie sheaves, but I can't do nothing now. I have to hire a woman, for 6d. a-day and her food, to do my washin'. Food, sir? If it

wasn't for what Mr. O——'s good enough to send me, I should never taste butcher's meat. Now and then, perhaps, when we can, we pick up a few odds and ends of a Saturday night at Wimborne. Pork's 9d. a pound. Women makes 5d. a pair at gloving, but I never learnt it, and couldn't knit neither. Buttonin' was work women could make money by times gone by—thread-buttons, sir. Bread and cheese, or bread and butter, is the chief of what we eat. Flour's  $11\frac{1}{2}$ d. a gallon. We keeps a pig, but if we owes anything, we sells it. Yes, we've a bit of a garden, and it's useful. 1s. 6d. a week we pays for this house. My husband earns 9s. a week reg'lar, but he's a asthma. Perhaps my son might earn 1s. 6d., but he's too weakly. Harvest-time my husband gets a shillin' extra. No, we've no perquisites. 3,000 turf we get in the winter, but then it costs 2s. 6d. a thousand to cut, and 12s. carriage. Some masters carries the turf for their men, but oun don't."

The poor woman told her humdrum story of narrow means with only subacid complaint against the present constitution of society, and with grateful acknowledgment of the kindness of those who had endeavoured to lighten her lot. In the midst of her autobiography she interpolated an *ad misericordiam* appeal on behalf of a brother of hers whom she took for granted I must know, because I came from London, and he had had "the cholera and the cramps, poor boy," in Kensal New Town.

Her statement will serve as a text for a few comments.

Fuel in some parts of Dorsetshire is so scarce that even in winter cottagers dare only light fires for cooking. They go out to collect windfall branches, and sometimes help the wind to strip the trees. Strings of women may be met in the lanes, with wood faggots balanced on their heads. When turf is accessible, however, and a cottager can cut for himself, and his master will carry for him, he can obtain for his labour a sufficient supply of fuel. Coals from Poole cost about 23s. a ton—retailed in smaller quantities, of course, they come to a good bit more. Coal-clubs have been started in Dorsetshire, allowing the poor purchasers 6d. in the hundredweight. “Ah, but can ye be sure that enough more money will be subscribed?” I heard a sceptical peasant question in reference to one of these. Labourers who live near common land or forest can keep cows, and turn their pigs in to fatten on acorns and beech-mast.

The question of “perkisits” is a complicated one. The allotment sometimes has to be paid for; sometimes the cottage is rent-free; sometimes not. Some Dorsetshire labourers get their “grist” allowed them as a complement to wages; others have to buy it from their masters at so-called market prices, and their butter and cheese also; and in both cases they complain that they are put off with an inferior article. The wheat they get, they say, is “pinched,” “tailing,” “refuge” stuff. Professor Johnston says, however:—“The small or tail corn, which the farmer separates before bringing his grain to market, and usually grinds for his own use, is richer in gluten than the

plump, full-grown grain, and is, therefore, *more nutritious*.<sup>\*\*</sup> The custom of giving beer or cider to agricultural labourers in Dorsetshire in lieu of money is dying out. Most fortunately so ; since neither the beer nor the cider was good enough to put any real strength into a man. He simply got his brain half-muddled by the cheap, poor stuff, instead of being able to take home for his wife and children more than the real money's worth of his muddler. On the east side of Dorset cider is despised. "Cider's got no heart in it," the people say,—"it only makes you eat the more."

As I have said before, the Dorsetshire hind is undoubtedly under-fed. Bread and "choke-dog," as he calls his county's cheese, now and then a bit of pork or bacon, or of mutton killed upon the farm just in time to avoid the imputation of "natural death," "cag-mag" purchased on Saturday night in the market-towns, broth made of peppered and salted soaked bread—these are the chief items in his bill of fare. "Meat!" echoed a Dorsetshire woman to me, as if I were mocking her poverty,—"Poor folk's pockets doesn't run to meat."

I called upon the genial "priest-vicar" of venerable Wimborne minster to obtain information and guidance; unfashionably early as I made my call, more than a hundred had called before me—in quest of soup-tickets. The Laureate's "propetty"-worshipping Farmer says—"Täake my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad." But my name is not Sammy, and I do not mean to take

\* *Chemistry of Common Life.*

the Lincolnshire farmer's word for it. It is silly to flatter the poor, but, considering their circumstances, I cannot see that they are a whit morally worse than the rich. Dorsetshire labourers, no doubt, improvidently diminish their small earnings, that ought to be devoted to their own and their families' support, by drinking more beer than is good for them ; but is there no selfish improvidence amongst rich men-folk, who have not the excuse of rheumatism-racked joints and comfortless homes to drive them to a good fire and chat over intoxicating tipple ? At the same time it is very sad to find that drinking prevails as it does in Dorsetshire. For those who maintain that the more "the poor" get, the more they will squander, it is a noteworthy fact that in the counties in which wages are lowest public-houses are, proportionally, most abundant. Drunkenness, however, is not *so* prevalent as it was in the county. There is immorality of another kind in Dorsetshire, as there is in all country places out of story-books. The field work in which the women and girls are engaged is one cause of this ; the bestially crowded state of the cottages is another. Where "gloving" and "knitting," however, have become staple industries, the farmers find it very difficult to obtain feminine labour, unless, as they frequently do, they hire a man with all his family—paying both the man and the members of his family lower wages than they would have got if hired singly. A woman, for instance, gets 6d. instead of 8d. a day. Like "plaiting" in Bucks and Beds, I should add, on

the other hand, "gloving" in Dorset is said to make slaves of children, and to disqualify those who have taken to it for domestic management and any more remunerative calling. Boys go to farm-work at a very early age in Dorsetshire. Youngsters of seven go to plough, and get bandy-legged through their wearisome plodding over the heavy fields. Even younger boys go cow-keeping. At ten a Dorsetshire labourer's son is, as a rule, expected to contribute his quota to the family income. As a consequence, the schoolmasters complain of brief and irregular school attendance, and in the night-schools to which a good many of the lads resort in the winter, in the hope of "bettering" themselves, very little, if any difference can be found between those who have and those who have not been at school before. The Wimborne relieving officer has favoured me with the following table of average wages in his union :—

Shepherds—11s. per week, house, garden, and thirty perch of potato ground, value 30s., £2 in lambing season, £1 for harvest. Carters—10s. per week, house, garden, fuel, potato-land = 30s., £1 for harvest, and some malt for drink during harvest. Boys, sixteen to eighteen years of age, 6s. per week; twelve to sixteen, 3s. 6d.; eight to twelve, 2s. Women—employed in field-work 8d. per day; in gloving from 2s. to 6s. per week. Ordinary labourers' wages are, however, as low as 7s. a week in some parts of Dorsetshire; 8s. or 9s. "wet or het"—sometimes without any allotments—appears to be a very common rate of pay. A little more is made by

"tut," or piece-work at hay and corn harvest, but that is generally needed to pay off debts contracted in the winter months. A week's illness in his family drives a labourer to the parish. Its aid is not looked upon now, as it once was, as socially degrading in Dorsetshire villages. "There's the house—they can't rob us of that," I heard a man say. "Young folks mustn't expect help if they don't go in, but they'll allow old folks 2s. 6d. a week." "Yes," sneered a listener, "2s. 6d. between two, and no bread, and 1s. 6d. to go for rent—that's a fat lot!" About one-sixteenth of the population of Dorsetshire is in receipt of parish relief. Low as the Dorsetshire labourer's condition is, however, it is said by good judges to be better than it was a quarter of a century ago ; but this he will not own himself. He will, indeed, with a kind of grudging gratitude, admit that bread is cheap, but in all other respects he looks upon the past as a labourer's golden age. "Har'st ain't har'st," an old man said to me, "since them machines come in. Look what a man could use to get, and what he do get now. Well, maybe, there's good in 'chnery, but there's too many on 'em. They overdoos it. That's what it is—they overdoos it."



## IX.

### THE WORCESTERSHIRE HAND-NAILER.

**J**N and about "the Black Country" nails have been made by hand for many a year, but it is a trade destined to die out. Machinery and strikes have robbed it of its vital force. The nail hammered out of hot iron is stronger than the nail cut out of cold iron, but not so much stronger in proportion to price as to enable it to compete successfully with its rival; and capital, moreover, to a very considerable extent, been frightened out of the trade by violence. Nailers' strikes are matters of very common occurrence now-a-days, and some of them, the masters say, are most unreasonable; but others, I have heard masters own, have been caused by the deplorable fact that it was impossible, or next to impossible, for the nailers to live on the wages they could afford to pay.

There are masters and masters, and those of the better kind complain bitterly that they are compelled to reduce wages by the sharp practice of those of the baser sort. When the former are willing to continue to give say 4s.

3d. a cwt., the latter, in order to be able to undersell them, will bring down the remuneration to 3s. 6d. Violence is no longer a characteristic of nailers' strikes. On the other hand, they bear privations with pathetic patience. They solace themselves with poetry, "learning from suffering what they teach in song." Every strike inspires a nailer-bard to produce a ballad or ballads. I have been favoured with copies of two of these, and, as I believe they have not hitherto been printed, I will quote them here. Every now and then their rhyme is "conspicuous from its absence," and the same may be said of their rhythm ; but there is a ring of reality in them that may make them serve as a suitable introduction to details of the hand-nailer's life.

#### THE NAILER'S LAMENTATION.

By J. K.

Come near, my friends, while I begin  
 My true but mournful song ;  
 I will be very careful  
 Lest I should now speak wrong.

*Chorus*—Oh, the discount, oh, the discount,  
 With it we can't agree :  
 For twenty shillings we will have  
 Before at work we'll be.

I am a poor nailmaker,  
 The truth I will tell you ;  
 I toil and labour all the week—  
 I know it is my due.

And when Saturday evening comes,

    And I've my money got,

I take it very careful home,

    And say " *This is the lot !*"

My wife then casts a look at me,

    And with a pitiful eye

" Is that all ?" mournfully she says,

    And then heaves a deep sigh.

And then she says, " Come and sit down

    To help to cut it out."

It almost bewilders my brain,

    And then I do walk out.

" But wait a moment, stop and see

    What has got to be paid,

And do not send me sorrowing

    So soon down to my grave.

" You know there is our coal and gleeds

    For the house and the shop fire ;

Likewise the mending of the tools

    And changing of the iron.

" My hammer, and my steady, too,

    Must be pared, if not steeled,

My bore and hardy must be done,

    Or I cannot make good nails.

" Out of repair our bellows are,

    And mended they must be ;

And eighteenpence for the tree-iron

    For snouting as you see.

" The house-rent, you know, it must be paid,

    Or else the bums will come,

And then if payment can't be made

    The goods will soon be gone.

" I have no money for your club,

    Then that's a sad affair ;

What shall we do when sickness comes ?

    We can't live on the air.

" Well, don't be so impatient now,  
For I have not yet done ;  
The shoemaker, he must be paid,  
Or shoes we shall have none.

" Our clothing has got very bare,  
Over and underneath ;  
Our children want some things to wear,  
They must not catch their death.

" There's also butter and sugar too,  
Tea, candles, soap, and flour,  
And there's no meat nor garden stuff  
In such a house as our.

" Now what's twelve shillings to cut up  
To pay so many things ?  
It would make a lawyer's head turn grey  
To try to meet such ends."

I cannot tell, I wonder why  
Our masters do not see  
How miserable and wretched too  
We poor nailers must be.

Our masters must stand at God's bar  
A just account to give,  
For keeping back the labourer's hire  
Which he ought to receive.

Then do not be discouraged.  
There is no room to doubt ;  
We shall have twenty shillings yet,  
By firmly standing out.

So now my poem I conclude,  
Hoping that each will strive,  
Both masters and their workmen all,  
To gain an heavenly prize.

*Chorus*—Oh, the discount, oh, the discount  
With it we can't agree ;  
For twenty shillings we will have  
Before at work we'll be.

The second "poem," composed by the same poet in 1868, is briefer, but of similar character. Its chorus is—

"Oh, those masters, oh, those masters,  
When will they do what's right—  
Give twenty shillings for a pound,  
And take us off the strike?"

The "poem" ends, however, thus—

"There are some masters in the trade  
To whom there's honour due,  
Who try to keep our prices up  
As long as they can do.

"God bless such men, long may they live  
To see our trade revive,  
So with these lines I will conclude,  
And lay my pen aside."

As I have intimated, however, there is small chance of the trade's ever reviving. Some forty or fifty years ago it employed 50,000 hands : about 20,000 is now the number. At one time a "nail-shop," *i.e.*, a tiny smithy, was attached to almost every farm house as well as cottage in the nailing districts—the farmer and his family hammering away at iron rods when farm work was slack. But those days have gone for ever. In 1830 machine-made nails were introduced, and the demand for hand-made almost instantly declined. The great London dock-companies were once good customers for hand-made nails, required for fastening tea-chests and other purposes—110 tons per annum used to be the annual order for the East India Docks ; but now the machine-made have almost superseded the hand-made for dock use. 'The

United States, Canada, and Australia also, have ceased to be capital markets for English hand-made nails.

In 1837 and 1838, owing to the competition of more cheaply-made Belgian nails, the English nailmasters were forced to reduce their wages. In 1842, the nailers, finding that their craft was in danger from these reductions, broke out in riot. Twenty thousand of them mustered and marched on Dudley, the head-quarters of the trade ; carrying off as prisoners the masters of all nail warehouses they passed upon their road. They tried to capture the Dudley masters also, but soldiers were hurried down from Birmingham, the Riot Act was read, the rioters were scattered, and their prisoners rescued. One consequence of this outbreak was that some of the best masters retired from the trade. In 1860 there was another serious nailers' strike, which lasted considerably more than a quarter of a year, and, of course, inflicted much misery on the strikers. Many would gladly have gone to work again, but were compelled to hold out by their fear that otherwise their bellows would be ripped or their nail-shops blown up with gunpowder.

At one time the nailers were, perhaps, the roughest people in all England. At election times they would attack the yeomanry with heated iron rods, and litter the ground with iron spikes to lame the horses. *Punch's* "'eave 'arf a brick at un" feebly represents the feeling with which a stranger was then regarded in a nailers' village. The inhabitants, being totally unable to discover the intruder's *raison d'être*, were almost unanimously of

opinion that he ought to be put to death immediately. They were in the barbarous stage which gave *hostis* its double meaning—the foreigner must necessarily be a foe. Drinking in order to get drunk, gambling, bull-baiting, pugilism, cock and dog fighting, were the nailer's favourite amusements. The three last still linger, on the sly, amongst the lowest classes of nailers, but as public entertainments they have shared for the last twenty years the fate of the previously put-down bull-baiting. Pigeon-flying is now the fast nailer's pet sport. It seems harmless enough, but, like horse-racing, it has got so mixed up with scampishness, that to say of a nailer, "Oh, he's a regular pigeon-flyer" is equivalent to saying that he is better known than trusted. There may still be some gambling amongst the men, and the boys openly practise it, clustering at pitch-and-toss, not in holes and corners, as London boys are now forced to do, but in the public thoroughfares. When copper coin is scarce the young gamblers squabble with flushed faces over brass buttons.

As to the drunkenness, that also may still be found amongst the nailers, as amongst other dwellers in the dreary Black Country and its grassed and wooded, gracefully undulating Worcestershire fringe. Public-houses, with fender-like perforated brass window-blinds—all polished brass, or partly painted green--are very common objects in that part of the world. Three dingy gilt balls are very common objects also, and sometimes, for customer's convenience-sake, the pawnbroker's sign dangles next door to the publican's. But the nailer does

not drink as he used to drink. Thirty years ago he thought it would be disgraceful if he did *not* get drunk pretty frequently: now there are a good many nailers who would be very much ashamed of themselves if they got drunk at all. In the last Factories Blue Book, I know, there is a report on the Sedgley nailers which makes out, amongst other things to their discredit, that they would almost sell their souls for beer; but I have authority, at least every whit as good as that of the writer of that report, for asserting that, *even if it be fair to take the report as a correct picture of the Sedgley nailer*, it would be grossly unfair to take the Sedgley nailer, so sketched, as typical of his class. Apropos of beer, a superintendent of police in the nailing districts told me that the recently enacted law which fines the buyer as well as the seller of beer, when the sale is made—after legal hours, had already proved very beneficial there.

There is very little illegitimacy in the nailing districts. The nailers—the girls especially—marry early; and, as a rule, are about to become parents when they marry. It is the local custom. But local opinion pronounces so strongly against concubinage that those who live together as man and wife in the nailing districts, without being man and wife, are very few—ten couples, for instance, in a population of six thousand—and do their best to make their neighbours believe that they *are* man and wife. A nailer looks upon it as a great misfortune if love has so far blinded him as to lead him to marry a servant girl, or any other lass who has not been brought up to nailing.

Nailers' children are taught their parents' trade when they are nine years old—or even at as early an age as seven. On an average it is eight months before the little hammerers can make a saleable nail. The protection which the Legislature has extended to children in many other trades has not yet reached the small nailers. They work in their father's shops, and so an inspector of factories would have to make a from-house-to-house visitation to get at them. Sometimes, when the masters have given out their iron late in the week, the little nailers have to work all Friday night and Saturday morning : their younger brothers and sisters, not yet promoted to the dignity of the "frame-block," creeping in to the clattering, scintillating nailshop from the adjoining cottage in the small hours, for the sake of warmth and company.

The nailers' children being so soon put to work, very rapidly acquire ideas of independence. Many of them speedily stipulate that they shall pay their parents a trifle weekly for their own keep : the rest of their earnings—however many non-productives there may be in the family—to be expended according to their own pleasure. With the grown-up girls this expenditure generally takes the form of dress-buying. Nailers' cottages are almost always poorly furnished ; male and female nailers are mostly poorly fed ; the male nailer is nearly universally poorly clad ; but in nailing communities, as elsewhere, woman proves herself to be *τὸν φιλοκοσμον*, and manages somehow to "come out extensively" on Sundays. Her

earnings, however, will not permit her to come out *so* extensively as some of her Black Country sisters.

I took a between-church-hours stroll in that depressing district. It seemed strange that church-bells should peal forth with such lusty merriment over that grimy chaos. Huge mounds of black and dirty-white rubbish ; melancholy asses cropping the sparse, shrivelled herbage on the banks of worked-out pits ; stagnant pools, spreading like little Dead Seas between the jumbled natural and artificial hills ; cinder-strewn meadows threaded by filthy footpaths ending at smutty stiles ; high roads fringed with a dreary continuity of dingy red-brick houses in the midst of which a yellow-washed house looks almost as pure as a lily ; small boys clustered on the roads, kicking and punching and bespattering their smaller feminine acquaintances, or almost splitting themselves as they mimic, at his very heels, the stride of the passing stranger and shout ferociously at the bottom of his spine, under the impression that they are freezing his marrow ; bigger lads loafing about in comforters—equally uncomplimentary to “thaht chep,” as tone and gesture convince him, but fortunately couching their abuse in a patois that makes three parts of it unintelligible ; narrow, ragged-hedged lanes leading nowhither in particular, pitsalled with inky puddles through which unwashed, unshaven, heavy-booted men flounder and splash, with their hands in their coat-pockets, and vicious looking dogs cowering at their heels ; jaundiced canals crowded with lanky black barges ; sloping tramways almost obliterated by gritty,

viscous black mud ; crossing and converging railways with roadside stations that look like recently emptied soot-warehouses ; gibbeted black colliery wheels ; dilapidated engine-houses and cottages sinking, on one side, into the undermined earth ; dingy-red and clay-coloured cones and domes ; iron-works' furnaces, chimneys of all kinds of "works," sending up a suffocating smoke obstinately bent on coming down again ; here and there a puff of white vapour darting out lambent tongues of flame—that is a faint outline of the Black Country's look by day. Its day aspect is more depressing than its night's, since then there is something weirdly grand in the ruddy fires belched out from the blackness, and the lurid cloud-wreaths that circle over them like fiendish *auricôles*.

But I was talking of my Sunday morning's walk in the Black Country. I saw a grandame with a skin of wrinkled parchment, shaking her skinny fist at a crowd of larking youngsters, and heard her exclaiming in pious wrath, "Instead of being about their Master's business ! A bobby should come along—that's what's wanted." After all, the youngsters were doing no great harm, and I am inclined to think that the anger of the old lady, who was dressed in cotton, had been chiefly caused by a neighbour who had swept by, arrayed in a handsome Paisley shawl and a rich black silk gown "paged" up over a white petticoat with a vandyked worked border. Her squat little husband was with her, attired in a glossy, creased slop-dress suit of black broadcloth, much too big for him, and looked very sheepishly uncomfortable in his Sunday finery.

almost invisible bonnet and a vastly visible chignon, a black velvet mantle, a violet dress, and a scarlet petticoat. She tried hard to give "the Grecian bend," but her attempts were not successful. Every time she listed her feet she wiped her heavy heels upon her glowing petticoat, and the thick broad border of mud it had thus received did not add to the grace of her *tout ensemble*. She stopped at a broken fence within which the great beehive-shaped kiln of some Roman cement works was breathing forth its chimney-on-fire-like odour. A haggard, pallid, dusty, splashed, and ragged man crawled out of the doorway of the beehive to chat with her, and I found to my astonishment that he was the father of this Black Country belle.

There is a great deal of "marrying in" amongst the nailers ; and to this some attribute their generally poor *physique*. At any rate, most of the men-nailers *have* an unmuscular look. It is not that they run to fat : like Hood's Eugene Aram, most of them are "very pale and lean and leaden-eyed." They suffer much from rheumatism : being "out-workers," they can rush when they please from their heated nail-shops into the open air. If a nailer chances to rear an exceptionally strong boy, the lad is sure to forsake the paternal calling and take to the pits or iron-works ; only using his skill as a nailer when work in his new trade is slack. A man who has done nothing

but make nails from his childhood will sometimes take to the iron-works, but he is dead-beat by the labour in three days.

Amongst the nailers, nicknames almost supersede names. I subjoin a list of a few of the sobriquets used in one village :—Moll Dowdy, Wockum, Pongy, 'Tacker, Tucky, Figup, Joe Cricket, Nell Gouge, Latchet, Tinky, Wobber, Crab, Smacker, Bug, Crackback, Firelock, Waxer, Dainty, Spirit, Squirrel, Popper, Funny, Growler, Nump, Blackbats, Flathat, Cocky, Cuppy, Doggum, Teapot, Pighook, Wanton, Drownder, Slapfoot, Jack Squat, Peacock, Pecker, Nacker, Kickpudding, Old Dragon, Bloat, Connop, Croaker, Sally Fat, Moll Crip, Yalce Trimmet, Old Hosse's Neddy, Nuzzle, Jay, Fiddler, Scad, Flap, Wag, Twag, Smiler, Bonty, Tallyho, Cog Round, Cobby, Stout-un, Shagsby, Snob, Gobb, Rag, Boxer, Fisher, Shuff, Fadomy, Duggon, Docky, Bally, Bummers, Smarts, Guzzle. The derivation of these nicknames is sometimes obvious, sometimes can be guessed at, but often it is most puzzling. It is easy to understand why a man of the name of Partridge should be called *Bird* by nickname-loving neighbours ; but why should a man of the name of Southall be called *Smacker*, and a man of the name of Pearson, *Ding*? I think if Mr. Mark Antony Lower were to explore the nailing districts, he would discover that the surnames at present superseded by nicknames there, had in their turn, and at no very distant date, been nicknames which had superseded nicknames, advanced, like themselves, afterwards

to the doubtful dignity of surnames. Christian names, at any rate, would seem to be a very modern institution in the nailing districts. As a special favour, I have obtained a brief loan of a volume, which the lender—a nailer—considers the pearl of his library—an exceedingly tiny tome, without date, entitled, “A Selection of Poetry, by a Cradley Bag-pudding.” In this anthology, culled, probably, about the beginning of the present century, there is a copy of verses headed “Christening the Wench ‘Ben.’” I will quote as much of it as I can with decency. Cog Round is a young nailer at the Lye, who has married, after the fashion of matrimony then in vogue, a naileress, Molly Wobber.

“ At length she brought forth a fine wench,  
     And Cog swore that it should have a name,  
     For none of his family had,  
         Which made the people cry shame.

“ So Cog ax’d of a neighbouring parson  
     If any objection he had got,  
     To give a name to the young bairn  
         Which had lately come to his lot.

“ The parson consented and came,  
     And Cog caper’d like one that was wild,  
     And called out to Molly up-stairs—  
         ‘Here’s the mon come to due the child.’

“ ‘ Well then, ax the mon into the parlour,  
     And I’ll be down-stairs in a minute,  
     And fetch the wench in with the child,  
         As the mon may prepare to begin it.’

“ The priest asked what name they’d in view,  
     But both Molly and Cog did declare,  
     ‘We mun leave it entirely to you,  
         For we’re strangers to names about here.’

" 'Perhaps a Scripture name you would prefer?'  
 'Why,' says Cog, 'I have no choice at all;'  
 'Perhaps your wife may have thought of a name?'  
 But the devil a word spoke Moll.

" Says the parson, 'What think you of Ben?'  
 'Ay,' says Cog, 'that will do well enough;  
 So to christen the child he prepared,  
 With some water out of an old trough.

" So they christened it 'Ben,' you must know,  
 And when the ceremony was o'er,  
 The parson he gave them his blessing,  
 And wish'd them good morn at the door.

" But, as soon as the door was closed,  
 Molly bawls as she sits on her bench,  
 'You old fool, you've had it done *Ben*,  
 Same time you know it's a wench.

" 'Why the de'il,' says Cog, 'dain't you speake  
 Before the mon went away,  
 When he ast you what it should be?  
 But the devil a word did you say.'"

Molly sends her husband to bring back the parson:—

" Cog search'd, but no parson could find,  
 And return'd in a sad, sullen mood,  
 And cried, 'Blow you, Moll, all would have been right,  
 If you'd open'd your trap when you should.'

" Poor Molly, so modest before,  
 In great fury at Cog she flies;  
 And Cog, for to finish the scene,  
 Furnished Moll with a pair of black eyes.

" Perhaps at these people's manners you'll laugh,  
 But surely you'll not be surprised,

*When I tell you that was the first  
That was in the City\* baptized.*

" But in this great age of improvement,  
For refinement, it seems, they've a taste ;  
And who knows ? in a century to come,  
No place may shine like Lye Waste ! "

Of the places in which the hand-made nail trade is carried on—almost every one, besides the nails common to all, making some nail peculiar to itself—this Lye Waste is one of the most quaintly typical. Some of the hovels which, as one of the local bards sings, the Lye Wasters used to " build like the martins, with dirt," still stand, but most of the nailers' tenements now are of brick. They are dropped down here, there, and everywhere, as if they had tumbled from the skies. A stranger loses himself in the narrow miry thoroughfares that wind and zigzag between the houses, as he might lose himself in a nest of London courts. Waste Bank, Careless Green, Dark Lane, the Dock, are a few specimens of the local nomenclature. The last bull ever baited in England was baited on Lye Waste. Girls used to work in its nail-shops half naked. Most Lye Wasters went bare-legged and bare-footed. They never dreamt of getting married, and " whenever they prayed, 'twas for ale or strong beer." Things are very different now at the Lye. The labours of the present vicar and his two predecessors have comparatively civilised the place. Not, however, as clergymen in the nailing districts would be the first to point out, that church teaching has done all the work. Besides the church there

\* The Lye used to be called "The Clay City," owing to the number of clay tenements it contained.

are six chapels at the Lye—one of them quite an imposing-looking Unitarian place of worship—and several of these have schools attached to them. The Church week-day and Sunday schools number about 1,100 pupils and teachers; 500 being the average attendance at the day schools; 260 attend the night schools. Both at the night-schools and the Sunday schools, young men and women remain up to the eve of their marriage.

One of the most interesting schools at Lye is the Little Nurses' School, started by the present vicar. Women cannot nurse whilst they are hammering nails, and so they hire little girls, at 1s. 6d. a week, to look after their babies. The little nurse goes for baby at seven in the morning, takes it back to its mother for refreshment at breakfast, dinner, and teatime, and finally restores it at ten P.M. How to get these little nurses anyhow to school, was for a time a great puzzle to the vicar. At last he proposed that they should come with their babies between five and six in the evening. 120 little women, staggering beneath 120 babies, in some instances very nearly as big as themselves, thereupon invaded the school-house. Linen baskets were provided as co-tenancy cradles for infants that went off to sleep, but the vast majority kept so obstreperously wide-awake, that the little nurses had to spend the greater part of their school-hour in marching about with heavily tramping feet, and singing at the very top of their shrill little voices. When asked how they quiet their charges, the little women answer, with the

gravity of grandmothers, that there are four ways of hushing "a child"—rocking it, singing to it, tapping it, and walking it about. Not much could be learnt under the circumstances I have described, and so it was arranged that the mother, as a rule, should be requested to take care of baby during the nurse's school-time. About fifty of the little nurses now attend the school, about a quarter of them bringing babies. It is pathetic to hear old-fashioned mites of twelve and thirteen telling of the nine, ten, and eleven babies they have nursed.

It must not be supposed from what I have said, that the nailers have become perfect models of manners. When some of them want to speak to a clergyman they call out "Hi!" after him, and beckon to him to come back to where they are standing. Persons of this class, moreover, when they wish to be polite, are puzzled how to set about it. Not being often in the habit of using titles of respect, they are vague in their notions as to their gender, and the chances are that they will call their parson "ma'am." Beneath the rough exterior of the uncouthest niler, however, there is often a great deal of kindheartedness, while some of the nailers are really superior men. Speaking of those amongst whom he has long laboured at Halesowen, Archdeacon Hone said to me, "I could pick out from my parish nailers whom any one, who was a gentleman himself, would pronounce thorough gentlemen, wherever he might meet them, in spite of any little awkwardnesses they might commit—men of bright

intelligent and genuine regard for other people's feelings."

Although the nailers have a rough kind of respect for the clergy of the English Church, and are ready enough to accept their help in time of trouble, they have not much liking for their preaching. Perhaps a good many of the nailers still have not much liking for any kind of preaching, but for most of those who have, the average Anglican sermon is not sufficiently hot i' the mouth and ear. Good sense, good taste, good arrangement, and good wording are as insipid as "cold veal without salt" to these hearers. It is strong language, loudly delivered, with gesticulation to match, which they crave after. A parson who does not bellow and perspire profusely in the pulpit they cannot believe to be a really religious man. Accordingly, ministers of the Primitive Methodists are the popular favourites in the nailing districts (I had the pleasure of hearing one reverend gentleman of this denomination as soon as I got within about a furlong from his tabernacle), and "revivals" ever and anon occur there. I am sorry to add, that I have been told of drunken nailers who have been "converted" at these revivals, and then backslidden into a state of beer within a week or two.

Wandering through nailers' quarters, when no strike has taken place, you may often see a good many of the nail-shops closed, or if not closed, with no one in them. There are several reasons that account for this. Sometimes the masters do not give out the iron until the middle of the week, and when it is given out at the

beginning, nailers often like to "play," *i.e.*, take holiday for a day or two before they set to work. So long as they have accomplished their tale of nails by pay-time on Saturday, they can, of course, as they work in their own shops, choose their own work-hours. They say that in hot summer weather it is almost impossible for them to work by day, but at all times they seem to have a preference for late hours. "Time to see nailers is about nine at night," said one, who had come up to lounge on the half-door of a nail-shop I had entered. In another shop a woman was hammering away at her frame-block whilst a little girl, seated on the hearth of the forge, was warming her toes at the fire. "She's deaf and dumb," said the woman. "I've five children, and can't send one of 'em to school." Under such circumstances it seemed strange to see the man's frame-block idle, although, after all, if he worked up his week's iron within the week, he was not really shirking his share of the duty of supporting his family. But I could not help being amused when my lounging friend already quoted gravely added, "I wish Parli'ment ood make a lawer to put down work after seven."

Wherever I looked in, one, two, three, or four of such loungers came up to hang over the half-door, and corroborate or modify their working neighbours' statements : both workers and non-workers being very eager to discredit any figures I quoted on masters' authority. As will be seen presently, however, the masters' statement

which I did quote, from my impression that the firm from which I had received it was an honest one, fairly willing that masters' statements should be put to the test of being set side by side with men's statements, gave a lower figure on the important point of the average earnings of the nailers than I got at first from the men.

There is nothing very picturesque in a nail warehouse. It consists of long floors full of open sacks of nails with all kinds of odd fancy names, and stitched-up bags of nails that look like swathed Westphalian hams, of oyster-barrel-like kegs of nails, of great rolls of sacking, and of thickets of "bundles" of iron rods. On the lower floor there is a short counter with a big pair of scales, in which the nails, as they are brought in on the Saturday, are weighed by the foreman, under the inspection of one of the firm. Each "bundle" of iron weighs half-a-hundred-weight, and old women may be seen going home from the warehouse each with a bundle on her shoulder, like chimney-sweepers with their lighter sheaves of brush-handle joints. There are two kinds of hundredweights known in the nail trade. Rolled iron, used for spike nails reckons the normal 112 lbs. to the hundredweight; split rod iron, 120 lbs. 120 lbs. of iron made up into from 72 to 108 lbs. of nails: the waste is known as "slack." When trade is brisk, the masters give out the next week's iron when the men come for their pay on Saturday, or on the following Monday morning; at other times, on Tuesday or Wednesday. Besides the regular masters,

however, there is a spurious species, called "foggers"—the local substitute for *factors*—who carry on business upon the truck system. These men expect those who work for them to buy their flour, &c., from them, and will take in nails at any time—when, for instance, a nailing has made just as many nails as will enable him to purchase a meal with them. The foggers, of course, are able to undersell the regular masters, but when the latter have to make up a sudden order they sometimes buy of the foggers. The men are conscious of the injury they receive from the foggers, and in one of their strikes made this appeal to their masters—"We'll knock off Tommy Truck, if you'll knock off Molly Truck;" *i.e.*, I believe, "we won't buy flour of the foggers, if you won't buy nails of them."

Let us step into this nail-shop, however, and ask the lean, pale, whiskerless, civil head of it the meaning of Tommy and Molly Truck. He thinks we want to be too knowing—to pry too closely into the mysteries of his craft. A sly grin spreads slowly over his pale face as he glances at his neighbours clustered at his door, and he answers thus—"Tommy Truck and Molly Truck was people that used to live in these parts, sir, but they was both bad characters, and so we got two coffins, and buried 'em long ago." The neighbours outside grin hugely over this not very explanatory obituary. There are five frame-blocks in the shop, worked at by the man, a grown-up son, a smaller one, a girl of sixteen, and a girl of fourteen. We will ask the man what his family's weekly earnings

are, quoting at the same time a masters' statement that, in quite an exceptional case, they have paid a family £3 for a week's work. Both inside and outside the shop—the exceptional qualification meeting with no appreciation—this estimate of wages provokes derisive laughter. "A lot of 'em there mun ha' been, and then they mun ha' been always at it," is the universal satirical comment. "Well, my three, sir," says the father-nailer, speaking of his two girls and younger son, "might, perhaps, earn 16s. a-week."

"Ay, but they mun work from seven to ten," is shouted in from the door.

We will pay a visit now to another nail-shop, in which a civil but sharp young fellow, who has plenty to say for himself and his mates, is shedding showers of ruddy sparks from his "stithy," or small anvil, whilst a little girl, working at the bellows for play, blows the "gleeds" (refuse fuel from the puddling-furnaces of the Black Country) into blue interlambent flames; a second, like the little deaf-and-dumb girl, warms her toes on the forge hearth, and a third lolls against its semi-circular wall.

Our nailer just now is welding together the ends of iron-rods, used up too short for holding. He is a horse-nailer; and when asked what "Brazils" are, makes an iron-rod glow into a white heat, and, using it as a torch, pries about in the "bundle"-encumbered recesses of his shop, whence in a few seconds he produces specimens of the nails made for the mules of South America. They are stamped with a human hand, a half-moon, and other

trade-marks, and have curiously-twisted tails. He explains that they have to be beaten straight before they can be used for shoeing, but that they are sold crooked to prove the goodness of the iron. (I have been told at a warehouse, however, that this is a mere custom of the trade, since almost any wrought-iron could be so twisted.) Then he sets to work again, making his "counters" and "half-counters," and is very much astonished that I need to have the difference in the heads pointed out to me. His block-frame is a structure about two feet square, ballasted with earth, and thickly strewn with "slack." With his left foot he plies a treadle that drives a current of air through the "blast-pipe" on to the hot iron. With his right arm he hammers the hot iron on his little anvil—"stithy, we calls 'em." With his right foot presently he works a treadle that brings down a heavy-headed bevelled hammer, called the "Oliver," working between two stumps, in rapid strokes, upon the maturing nail. He impresses the trade-mark on a metal projection called the "box-marker," and then on the "Hardy," an upright little plate of metal between two little metal pillars, he strikes off from the end of the rod the completed nail into the metal "nail-pot," in which it clatteringly claims acquaintance with cooler, previously completed fellows. He is asked how many strokes it takes to make a nail. "Thirty," he says. "Count; but I think the Oliver will beat you." A quicker counter than myself employs his faculty, and makes out the number to be thirty-three.

The nailer takes me as his apprentice. . "You must hold the rod lower down," he says, when I have somewhat gingerly thrust it into the gleeds, and blown them up into snapdragon flames. I hammer away on the heated rod with a will, and work both treadles with equal energy, but I am afraid that I should not have turned out anything that any one with the most fanciful imagination could have even supposed to be a nail, had not my master come to my assistance and "guided my hand"—*i.e.*, jerked my elbow—in very rapid writing-master style. Between us, we produced an article of which I am very proud, although it *did* stick on the "Hardy," as if the head were made of lukewarm glue, and though its point is almost as inappreciable as that of a bad joke. "You see, it took longer to spoil *that* than to make *mine*," says my master with a grin, and he insists on having a specimen of his workmanship put into his apprentice's pocket-book, together with the article of which the apprentice is so unjustifiably proud.

And now for what my master and his lounging-on-the-half-door audience have to say about the remuneration of their trade. I explain to them that my figures suppose that those who earn the quoted wages work hard at constant work—that I have been told by masters that few men have full work for three months together—and then read out the following list of wages :—

"Makers of common wrought nails under five inch,  
14s. a-week."

Statement allowed to pass muster.

"Above that size, 20s. a-week."

Strongly disputed.

"Small horse-nail up to 8 lb. horse [*i.e.*, 1,000 nails = 8 lbs.], 20s."

Hemmed and hawed over.

"Shoulder nails, 18s."

Men say 17s.

"Above that size, 25s."

Men say 21s.

"Women about 15s. a-day."

*Answer.*—"That's right."

"Children on an average, 3s. 6d. a-week."

*Answer.*—"That's about the thing."

"Average wages, taking good times and bad together, not half the quoted rates—certainly not 10s. a-week for the whole trade."

*Answer.*—"Oh, yes, it must be more than that."

*Myself.*—"Well, that's a master's estimate."

*Eager answer.*—"Is it, sir? Well, no doubt, you're about right. If you put down what we've told you, you'll have got the thing as correct as a man can give it. But then—"

"But then" was expounded to me by my initiator into the mysteries, or rather, I should say, the mysterious difficulties, of nail-making. He made, like most of his comrades, superfluous use of the aspirate, but in other respects his statement can be most effectively given as nearly as possible as he gave it:—"Horse nails are reduced ad. since 1865; 4s. they

were, and 3s. 3d. they are, and they're coming down to 3s. Iron is cheaper now than when the reduction was. There's the Swedish iron you can import—good iron, too—cheaper than you can make it at home. But the masters takes advantage of the weaknesses of their men. Every man has got to stand on his own bottom now. We used to have a union, but it's broken up. Men as wouldn't spend 3d. a week for their rights, will spend a shilling on their lusts, and we as would do what is proper have to suffer for thoughtless men, and no wonder the masters take advantage of us, when we don't stick together. Not but what I could live pretty well on my wages at present, if I always had 'em—for I can work as well as most in the trade—if it wasn't for the drawbacks. But there, you must take out of my earnings 1s. a week for fuel, and 4d. say, at the least, for wear and tear of tools, and 6d. the masters stop for the waste of iron, and then there's 3d. a week for cartage. Fuel costs the common nailers, say 8d. a week, and their wear and tear, as you call it, would come to from 3d. to 4d. We pay 2s. 3d. a week for this place—yes, I mean the house as well as the shop—and we've to pay 10s. a year poor's rate, and 3s. highway rate."

"Of course, sir, you know Mr. Thomas Hughes, M.P.," my informant presently proceeds to remark. "He makes himself pretty widely known. Everybody knows Mr. Thomas Hughes, M.P., and knows good of him, I should say."—"He must be a good fellow, or he couldn't have written 'Tom Brown.'"—"Well, sir, I

don't know anything about that, but Mr. Thomas Hughes, M.P., is a real gentleman, and him, and the Honourable Auberon Herbert, and Professor Sedgwick of Cambridge College, and Hodgson Pratt, Esq., of London, and our vicar's curate, Mr. Lakeman, are good friends to our co-operative society. The chaps would have me chairman of it. Here's the thirty-fourth quarterly report, but I'll give you a cleaner copy if you'll come down with me to the stores."

When my guide had slipped on his coat he piloted me to a decent-looking general shop, in which people were buying groceries, &c., and thence into a cellar, guarded by a fiercely-barking dog, in which sugar, salt, &c., were warehoused, under the added pilotage of a stolidly bumptious small boy in a long white apron, who seemed to consider a copying-press an invention of which the Lye Co-operative Society had the exclusive possession. I saw also great canisters of tea, churn-like tea-urns used at the society's *soirées*, sides of bacon, tubs of butter, exceedingly smart neck-ties, hats that defied the stock in any hatter's shop in Stourbridge to compete with them in combined style and cheapness, round and flat strata of fabrics for "ladies' dresses," piles of blankets purchasable by the members of the clothing club, and a tiny warehouse, with its little collection of bundles of nail-rods and rows of nail-bags, in which the society is endeavouring to make labour co-operate in production as well as distribution. Any one, of course, can make purchases at the society's stores—the stolidly bumptious small boy

tried to tempt me to purchase one or more of the very smart neckties, until reproved by the chairman's severer taste, expressed in the remark, "Nay, lad, put them back —they're too flashy for his liking, or mine either." But members of the society obtain at the end of the year a discount of 2s. in the pound on their purchases, receiving at the time of making them Birmingham-struck metallic checks, varying in nominal value from one pound to one half-penny. "And all this," exclaimed my chairman friend, with pardonable pride and illogicality, "a few poor workmen have created in a few years *out of nothing* —and we mean to have a reading-room and a lecture hall yet."

With all my heart I wish this plucky co-operative movement success, but from what I have seen of their condition, and heard of their prospects, I also heartily wish that the hand-nailers had a chance of being absorbed in some new local industry. Without assistance, assistance amounting to the payment of their passage-money and the bill for their outfit, it would be impossible for them to emigrate; and even if they could get to the colonies, it may be questioned whether they would prove a very serviceable class of colonists.



## X.

### THE LONDON OMNIBUS MAN.

**R**EADERS of the rising generation must be puzzled when they come across such a passage as the following in *Elia's Essays* : —“In one of my daily jaunts between Bishopsgate and Shacklewell, the *coach* stopped,” etc. Shacklewell now-a-days can scarcely be called a “*suburban retreat northerly*”—so thickly is it getting built over ; but, in amends, the Shacklewellians have a choice of lines of railway, of lines of tramway, and of lines of omnibuses, for their journeys to and from the City. I am not old enough to remember the two-horsed coaches to which Charles Lamb refers, distinctly, although I have a dim recollection of having once or twice ridden in one of these “short stages.” I think they were driven off the roads which run out from London, like the rays of a star-fish, when I was four or five years old,—omnibuses having been started a year or two before. At a much later date I remember an old lady who covered her lean,

wrinkled arms, as everyday wear, with short sleeves and long mittens, and who never could bring her lips to pronounce "omnibus," much less to utter the still vulgarer form of "bus." When an "Atlas" had put her down at the Eyre Arms, she would remark—"I have just returned from my journey to town by the stage."

The great company which manages the bulk of London's omnibus traffic is of French origin, and to France, in the first instance—only through the medium of an Englishman—we were indebted for our omnibuses.

Mr. George Shillibeer's is a curiously diversified career, even for a resident in this curious London, in which there is many an in-groove-confined East-Ender who has never been through Temple Bar, whilst others of our fellow-Londoners have been all kinds of things in all parts of the world. At starting Mr. Shillibeer appears to have been a precocious student of philology of some kind—at any rate he was sent to the Philological School. Then he served as a British midshipman in the Mediterranean, and afterwards as a coach-maker's apprentice in Long Acre. He set up on his own account in his new calling in Paris, built carriages for princes and omnibuses for M. Laffitte. He then returned to London and started omnibuses here; next he became a cab improver, and finally he developed into a practical preacher of "Reform your undertaker's bills." His name, originally neighbour to Bunhill Fields Burial Ground, and still hard-by on the other side of the way, must be a very familiar one to passengers along the City Road.

Mr. Shillibeer began his London enterprise with two omnibuses. What a host we have now—in spite of the more commodious tram-cars—green, blue, red, yellow, white, and liver-coloured,—rumbling in the aggregate, millions of miles a year, individually, thousands. If a lazily curious man wants to amuse himself cheaply, let him take a course of omnibuses, generally selecting the roof, and then travelling as far as the 'bus will carry him. The distance a London omnibus will now-a-days convey one for a groat is really an almost startling proof of the benefits the public derives from competition amongst its servants.

Omnibus-drivers have followed a variety of callings before they mounted the 'bus-box, but these have almost always been more or less "horsy," and "horsiness," like having "been in the army," or "followed the sea," gives, at least, a superficially homogeneous look to its heterogeneous votaries. I refer to people who really come into personal contact with horses, and know something practically about them—not to the people who simply bet upon them, a good many of whom could as easily ride or drive a wild hippopotamus as the mildest-tempered mere land-horse.

The omnibus-driver occasionally seedily reproduces—*heu, quantum mutatus ab illo*—the old—long as to distances, broad as to shoulders, short as to neck and stature—stage-coachman. He is healthily brown-faced, or beet-root complexioned; airily or unctuously witty, humorous, and gallant; civilly or sulkily dignified; con-

siders that he is conferring a compliment on the passenger he selects to converse with ; relishes plenty of good beef and a sufficiency of good beer, with now and then a glass of something "short ;" sometimes goes in for a jaunty nattiness of attire, just like his predecessor. He inherits all, or almost all, his coach-compelling fore-driver's anti-rail prejudices. When I was a boy, bowling along the dusty Bath road from school, the Great Western Railway was being constructed, in here and there parallel raw instalments, swarmed over by big, fierce, untiring white-ant navvies. I used to hear the coachman and the box-seat passenger (who, if of a horsily go-ahead temperament and liberal disposition, was sometimes allowed to "take the ribbons," "tool the tits"—what fast young swell of our days is ambitious of the honour of driving a 'bus ?) talking about railways. They were to me, *pro tem.*, the greatest men in the whole world, and, as I listened to their expressions of scathing contempt, I marvelled at the upstart presumption of Brunel. The "fine old crusted prejudice," against iron roads which was poured forth freely then I have been supplied with since by the drivers of London 'buses whose vehicles plied to and from, as their chief convenience, metropolitan railway stations. Said one them, as, *en route* for the Victoria Terminus, we rumbled over a grass-grown suburban branch of rail, recently constructed and then not annexed by an enterprising main-line company—as he pointed his satire with a contemptuously perfunctory side-turn of his whip :—

"Payin' line, that, sir ! I see its balance sheet in the *Tellygrarf* t'other day. What they'd 'ad to pay in six months was pretty nigh upon three thousand pounds--'receipts for the 'alf-'ear, £12, 7s. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.' That'll run us hoff the road in an 'urry—I *don't* think. It's on'y them as 'as lost their wits a'ready as thinks they'll gain by railroads. The railway chaps nobbles their tin, and then they larfs at 'em to theirselves. An' sarve 'em *right*."

Another time, journeying from London Bridge Station, I chanced to say to the 'bus-driver beside whom I sat that the North Metropolitan Company had got its bill, and that I supposed we should soon see tram-cars running in the City Road along which we were jolting.

He gave me a quick, anxious, side-long look ; but when he found that I was not a dangerous lunatic about to attempt to fling him from his box, he treated me as a grovelling idiot almost beneath contempt.

"*Tram-cars* where there's traffic like this 'ere !" he exclaimed, with withering scorn. "A man as talks like that must be a—*Hass*, sir, whoever he be."

The time-keepers are a far more varied set of men than the drivers; ranging from the merry-faced, shabby, obsequious, obliging little fellow who pops in and out, like a rabbit, from the bar of the inn from which his 'busses start, liberating warm whiffs of beer fumes and tobacco-smoke, and who blows his whistle quite apologetically to remind the drivers and conductors, who chaff him constantly and treat him occasionally, that it is time for them to start, to the reduced Mr. Dombey-like person-

age, who only unbends with the policeman, and is severe to mark shortcomings not exceeding the fraction of a second. But the conductors—"cads" as they are irreverently called—carry off the palm for miscellaneity.

"Let no man from this time," profoundly remarks Dr. Johnson, "suffer his felicity to depend on the death of his aunt." Let no man, I say, make sure that he will never have to mount the "monkey-board!" Shillibeer's first two conductors were naval officers' sons, and persons of almost every calling have shouted, "Now for London! —Benk! —Benk! —cit-ee!" Without putting the slightest strain upon my memory, I can call to mind as conductors who have taken my fourpenny-bits or coppers a smart, smartly-dressed, ruddy, good-tempered young fellow, looking, with his flower in his button-hole, like a jolly young country squire, satirically called by his less swellish co-professionals the "Hearl;" a slouchy, dirty young man, with greasy green corduroy trousers, fitting tight to the leg, apparently formerly a stable-help, or a proprietor of knock-'em-downs; a broad-shouldered, bull-necked, bulldog-faced, flattened-nosed, wide-mouthed, good-naturedly grinning chap, plainly an ex-pugilist; a puffy-faced young fellow, in a tweed tourist-suit turning limp and seedy, who looked like a merchant's clerk who had "lost his situation" through fondness for "late hours" in two senses; a shame-faced youth, in a threadbare black frock-coat, which seemed to have been varnished with snail-slime, who might, perhaps, have escaped from under-usherehood in some "commercial academy" in a dreary, dusty, sub-

urban road ; a mechanic, without a spark of natural fun, who thought it necessary in his new position to go in for chaff, and did his chaffing as naturally as a young Quakeress who has kicked over the traces, makes her first essay in singing nigger melodies ; and a moody man, ever suspecting that some one or other of his passengers wanted to cheat him, whom somehow I put down as a greengrocer, or milkman, who had failed in business through giving too much credit.

Why is "cad" a term of reproach? Doubtless there are black sheep amongst omnibus conductors, but so there are in other professions—the Church not excepted. I cannot deny that some conductors are surly, a very few downright uncivil, but the *civility* of the large majority of those whom I have fallen in with—at any rate of late years—is what strikes me.

An omnibus conductor has a good deal to try his temper. He gets pretty good wages, but then he may suddenly lose them, without a reason given, except that his services are no longer required. He knows that in spite of the "character" he must bring before he can obtain employment, he is suspected, simply because money passes through his hands, of a wish to cheat his employers, if he can only get the chance. He knows that he is "spied upon," and does not know who amongst his miscellaneous freights, of either sex, of any age, or outward "social standing," may be the hired informer. Scarcely ever allowed a holiday, he has to ply in all weathers what soon becomes his otherwise very monoton-

ous calling, through hours so long that he rarely sees his children awake, except when one of the youngsters brings him his dinner in a covered basin. He has to snatch his meals as crocodile-dreading dogs lap the Nile. He is thumped on the shoulder-blades, rapped on the knuckles, with the handles of walking-sticks, poked in the ribs with the points of umbrellas and parasols, as if he had no more feeling or sense of personal dignity than a stone. He is ordered to call news-boys, has to run after blown-off hats, swing heavy baggage up to the roof, and hunt in the straw for small coin which careless passengers have dropped, or scheming passengers pretend to have dropped, without receiving a word of thanks for his pains. In spite of his necessary sharpness, he is sometimes bilked. When a dispute about the amount of fare arises, the general tendency is to suppose that the conductor wants to bilk, even though the plainly painted table of fares unmistakably proves him to be right. "I know 3d. is what I always paid before when I got down here," says his interlocutor, grudgingly producing the additional penny demanded and looking round on his fellow-passengers for the *esprit-de-corps* sympathy in suspicion which he seldom fails to obtain. People who are carried beyond their destination through having gone to sleep, or scarcely knowing the Bank from the Bethnal Green Museum, always blame the conductor, whom they have not told where they wanted to get down. If they have told him, and the 'bus stops three doors beyond their turning, they threaten to report him. Then there

are the provoking people who keep the 'bus waiting when they have got out, whilst they hunt in all their pockets for their money: at last fishing out a sovereign, which they ask the conductor to run and change—dapping about between the vehicle and the public-house into which they have seen him dive, with most comical anxiety. Finally, there are the couples and trios of fidgetty old ladies, who, having vague ideas as to the exact whereabouts of the place they want to go to, fancy that any omnibus, going any way, will take them to it. The 'bus is stopped. The conductor scurries like a lamp-lighter to the herb-stone, engages in animated and speedily perplexed conversation with the old ladies—ending in mutual disgust. They almost shake their fists at him as he hurries back to his perch, having at last found out that they want to go to South Kensington in a 'bus that is bound for Kennington. I repeat that it is the civility of the generality of omnibus-conductors which strikes me. Speak with common decency to them, and you will meet with more than merely civil service from them—with willingly put-themselves-about attention and a gratitude in look and tone which does not say much for the manners of the bulk of omnibus passengers.



## XI.

### THE LONDON CABMAN.

**T**HE cabman is conspicuous in London streets by his presence, but still more conspicuous does he make himself by his absence,—when fog, snow, or a strike has eliminated him from our thoroughfares. A cabmen's strike ! We know what that means, when only of short continuance. If cabmen formed themselves into a union, with funds ample enough to enable them to hold out,—a mere guess at the awful consequences makes one shudder. When we shape certainties out of the darkly vague cloud of possibilities, the prospect is not less appalling. Imagine the state of things in which, for a month, say, only a few favoured newspaper reporters and M.P.'s could make cabs pull up at the kerb when they did hail for them ! The thrilling thought suggests the question : What *did* Londoners do when they had no cabs ?

But, in spite of the apparent stupendousness of the query, the answer comes readily enough, and proves an

anticlimax : They did without them, because, in those easy-going days, they did not want them.

In the first quarter of the seventeenth century hackney coaches began to ply in London and its neighbourhood, not from street stands, but from inn yards. According to one account, they were so called because Hackney,—then a verdure-surrounded village, affected by the nobility and gentry as a place of residence, and by the citizens as the turning-point and resting-place in a country stroll,—was the first resort to which the coaches ran. The first stand for hackney-coaches was opposite Somerset House. I am old enough to remember the hackney-coachman, with his red nose, low-crowned hat, hay buskins, and long drab greatcoat, caped with what looked like a series of magnified pen-wipers ; and the mouldy odour and rickety motion of the two-horsed vehicle he drove. The hackney-coaches were discarded private carriages, still bearing their ex-owners' arms upon their panels, as (much later) was also the case in Sydney, where the drivers struck when an attempt was made to vulgarize their time-mellowed heraldic emblazonments with bran new black-on-white number-plates. (I may remark, parenthetically, that the hansom has since been introduced into Sydney, with modifications which ensure a refreshing draught for the fare as he drives through that hot and dusty, but, nevertheless, pleasantest and most picturesque city of the veritable south).

Fifty-odd years ago cabriolets—soon shortened into cabs—were started in London. First of all the heads of

driver and fare were under one hood ; then the hood was dropped, and a seat for the driver was stuck on to the side of the vehicle, like a martin's nest on to a wall ; afterwards the driver was hoisted on to the roof of a covered vehicle, whilst his passenger got in and out by a back-door. Perhaps, because he was accused of getting out every now and then without paying, a side-door cab, still with room for two passengers only, but running on four wheels, and provided with a driver's seat in front, was next introduced ; and then came the double-seated four-wheelers, or "growlers," and the hansoms, or "shofles."

There have been no analogous changes in the men who have driven, or still drive cabs, except that the cabmen of the present day are, I believe, in spite of all the complaints we hear against them, morally superior to their predecessors. At all times, I am inclined to think, cabmen have had scant justice done them. Some of them, no doubt, are drunken, uncivil, outrageously abusive, pugilistically violent, dishonest at first hand, or in league with professional thieves and loose women ; but these black sheep, from which no flock is free, have, in the cabman's case, been most unfairly taken as types of the class. Anyone who uses cabs largely will admit that cabmen, as a rule, are civil enough if they are civilly treated, and not screwed down to their bare legal fare. Considering the prices of things in general, and the sums they have to pay for their cabs before they can pocket a penny for themselves, it would be almost impossible for

them to live if they got only what the law allows, and, therefore, it is not wonderful that they consider a solitary shilling no splendid coin as payment for a two miles' ride. More especially may a cabman be excused for indulging in his favourite form of satire, "What's this for?" when he is expected to make no charge for the carriage of a great dog,—a dog being, in the eyes of the law, devoid of personality, and yet not an article of baggage.

As a specimen of the unreasonable demands which the public sometimes make on cabmen, I will give an instance which was brought to my notice the other day, just after the journey had been accomplished.

A lady, residing in the neighbourhood of Park Lane, hired a hansom for an hour, and bade the driver take her to and round the inner circle in Regent's Park, then round the Park itself, down Portland Place and Regent Street to the Embankment, via Charing Cross, next to Westminster Bridge, along the Mall in St. James' Park to Buckingham Palace, along Buckingham Palace Road, up Grosvenor Place, and so home ; and for this long drive the man could not get a sixpence more than his legal fare of half-a-crown.

As to general character, Col. Henderson—and surely he ought to know—declares that cabmen are yearly becoming more sober, and, still more strikingly, more honest. In 1869 they gave up about 2,000 articles which had been left in cabs; since then they have given up 60,000. But let us hear the cabman speak for himself.

I subjoin, reproduced as closely as my notes and memory enable me to do so, the substance of what was said to me by a cabmen of more than thirty years' experience, in a chat I had with him a few nights ago in his neatly furnished house not far from the Great Northern Railway terminus. A more civil companion I do not wish to meet, and though he called himself "an ignorant man," he had plenty of shrewdness, and a fluent abundance and choice of words which some educated men might have envied him :—

"I am an ignorant man, sir. I do not know exactly what it is you want, and I should like to. Oh, is that it? Well, our greatest grievance of all is the privileged system. If it were not for that we should be a united body, instead of being split up as we are. I deny that it works well for the public. We've tried the point, and it's decided that a railway station is private property. First it was decided one way, and then the other ; but it's decided so now. The railway station is private property, and the railway authorities can admit what cabs they please. Well, I pay my penny and go in at the South-Western. They call that a free station, but we pay a penny each. In principle, of course, that is as bad a monopoly as the other, but we don't mind paying the penny. Well, you make a bargain with me to drive you anywhere you please ; if I charge you twice as much as I ought you've no remedy against me. It's private property : I'm not under the Act.

"And then, again, if I could stay after I had set down

most likely I should—to rest my horse, and get my chance of another fare. But now the street cabs come crawling back along the chief thoroughfares, and the privileged cabs go crawling back to the stations the same way, so there are always two lines of empty cabs in the chief thoroughfares crawling along on the look-out for fares. What I say, too, is this, when the privileged cabs are all out, the companies are good enough to call in street cabs, and if we're glad enough for them one time, why not always? I offended our Treasurer, Lord Richard Grosvenor, about this. He is connected with the railways, you see. I said to him, 'My lord, when you're with us you're all for the cabmen, but when you're with the directors you're all for the railways.' The Earl of Shaftesbury said about the same afterwards, but his lordship wasn't there to hear it.

"Another thing I object to is the careless way they grant the licences. Mere boys get them--blacking-boys sometimes. They're under the age, but they get those that are older to stand for them. Of course boys can afford to pay the master more than a man that has a family to keep. A shilling now, and then another afterwards, the master will clap on. Yes, they've to pass some kind of examination, but it's easy to get a map. I did myself, I'll own, for I began when I was a lad. Thirty-four years I've driven; thirty-two I've had a licence. Fifteen to seventeen hours I've worked a day—ay, eighteen, and seven days a week. Three shillings a week I gave a master for two years to get off Sunday

work. No, I don't look as if hard work had done me much harm, but then I don't do as a good many do, I never go to the public-house. Though I'm not a pledged teetotaller—there are a thousand cabmen pledged—it's seventeen years since I had a glass of ale. Glass in moderation? No, I don't object to a glass in moderation, but it's the second glass that does the harm,\* so I go without, and find I'm all the better for it. No, I don't own my cab; I did once, but I was unfortunate. I drive now with another man, so my time is shorter.

"Watermen? Oh, that was the old fashion in the City. A penny the cabmen gave them for water, and a half-penny when they were hired, at least, were supposed to give 'em—were *supposed* to give 'em. The policeman has the key of the water now, and that's another grievance I'd remedy. When the policeman is away we've to wait till he comes back before we can get water for our horses. But what's to prevent an old cabinman that's past work—that can't see well enough to be trusted to drive, or isn't strong enough to lift luggage—from being kept for that? He could see the water anyhow, and look after the cabs when the men were at dinner, and the tips he'd get would be a living to him, and make

\* "Drink not the third glass, which thou canst not tame

When once it is within thee, but before

May'st rule it as thou list,—and pour the shame

Which it would pour on thee upon the floor.

It is most just to pour that on the ground

Which would throw me there if I kept the round."

GEORGE HERBERT: "The Church Porch."

one the less to come on our Annuity Fund. Another thing is this, if we've a dispute with a passenger he can make us drive him to the nearest police-station, but he's only got to give us his card, and that may be a sham one. Besides, if we haven't given him a fare ticket, we lose all our expenses in the police-court. And that we should have to get our licences renewed every year is a great shame. We lose two days, and have to trouble two householders, time after time, to give us a character. We ought to have a permanent licence, to be kept as long as we behave ourselves properly.

"No, I don't object to the badge: I'm not ashamed of being a cabman. It's wonderful the change there is in the way cabmen are looked upon. Why, noblemen and gentlemen come to our meetings, and yet I remember when a cabman was thought mere dirt. Why, the very children would throw stones at us: it's a fact. Even *Lloyd* wrote against us. Though I was driving a cab I was in the newspaper line then, and not a *Lloyd* could I sell for a good bit after that. The cabmen wouldn't buy the paper, and the publics and coffee-houses we used would not. *Lloyd* had to apologize, and quite right, too.

"Oh, we've had all sorts in our line. Perhaps not a Peer of the realm, but ex-M.P.'s; yes, and a Baronet, and doctors, and green-grocers, and all kind of shopkeepers, and mechanics, and clerks: all sorts, as I said.

"How our Association was formed? Well, I'd a hand

in that ; but it's wonderful the work our Hon. Secretary gets through, and the money he collects for us. This is how it was. The Marquis Townshend—if you don't know him, of course you've heard of him—got talking to a cabman about the way he was using his horse. ‘Do you know who I am?’ says the Marquis. ‘No, sir,’ says the man. He was a quiet old fellow ; if he had been a cheeky young chap he'd have said, ‘No I don't, and I don't care.’ Well, the Marquis gives him his card, and that took him rather aback ; but they got talking, and the Marquis told him that he should like to do some good to cabmen if he only knew how, and asked him to get some of the fellows to meet him at 15, Soho Square, that night. The man asked me to go, but I said ‘No : what good can *he* do us?’ Then I remembered I'd heard him well spoken of in the way of charity. I've a blind brother married to a blind wife, that's how I'd heard of him. So I went, and when I found I could talk to him as easy as I could to anyone else, I said to him, ‘It's very kind of you, my lord, to trouble yourself so much about us : I've listened with great interest to what you've been good enough to put before us, but I'm sorry to say, my lord, that none of your schemes are practical.’

“He wouldn't have it at first ; but he was talked over at last into starting a fund to provide annuities for worn-out cabmen. He wanted to form a committee at once, but I said, ‘Excuse me, my lord, but we haven't got the proper material.’

“‘Nonsense,’ he says : ‘we've plenty here.’

" ' If you'll put it off for a fortnight, my lord,' says I,  
' I'll bring you the cream of the trade.'

" ' What's that ? ' says his lordship.

" ' Men who won't mind giving up time and money both  
to help others as well as themselves, my lord,' says I.  
And so the thing was brought about. Live on our fares,  
sir? It's impossible. We really live on the charity of the  
public,—what they give us over our legal fares. Take  
them all round, the public are very liberal, though every  
now and then you come across a mean one."

The Cabdrivers' Benevolent Association, referred to by my informant, was founded, I find, in March, 1870, by the Marquis Townshend, Mr. G. Stormont Murphy (the indefatigable Hon. Secretary), and five cabmen. Its objects are to give annuities (of £12) to aged and invalided cabmen, to grant loans without interest to its members, and temporary assistance to those of them who may be in distress from unavoidable causes, and to provide drivers belonging to the Association with legal assistance when they are unjustly summoned to the police courts. Of the 12,000 cabmen in London, some 1,200 belong to this Association. In the sixth year of its existence it has to its credit, and in invested capital, more than £2,200. A site has been promised for the asylum, or almshouses, which it is proposed to build for worn-out members of the Association; but hitherto cabmen have not taken up the project very warmly. It has been determined, however, that every member who has not already done so, should be called upon to contribute 10s to the Asylum Fund,

If all consent, £600 will be raised, and in that case Mr. Murphy has undertaken to do his best to collect £1,800, of which, on the same condition, Mr. H. A. Brassey, M.P., has promised £100. In the year 1875—6, the Association defended one hundred and twenty police summonses and assisted by loans, or relieved with gifts, eighty-six applicants, cabmen or their widows. An abstract of the previous circumstances of some of the men who have obtained pensions may be of interest :—

T. B., 77. Totally unfit from age to follow his employment : has been forty years a cabman.—J. M., 74. Asthmatic : thirty-seven years a cabman.—B. C., 73. His wife, a Biblewoman, aged sixty-seven, his sole support.—J. C., 74. Nothing to depend on, no friends able to assist : forty-one years a cabman.—T. S., 64. Disabled : no friends : forty-three years a cabman.—C. B., 68. Almost blind, dependent on his wife's earnings : forty years a cabman. T. B., 72. Asthmatic ; obliged to give up driving owing to bad sight and general weakness : twenty-four years a cabman, formerly a gentleman's coachman.—W. H. J., 75. Disabled by rheumatism and old age : twenty years a cabman, formerly a hackney coach-driver.

At the last election for pensions one of the unsuccessful candidates was :—

“Christopher Ingram, aged 70. Has three sons, all married, who have families to support, and are unable to help him. Suffers from bad sight, and is partly crippled in the hands. Has nothing now to depend upon : has been forty-one years a cab-driver.”

At 15, Soho Square, the Cabmen's Shelter Fund also has its head-quarters. An article which appeared in the *Globe* suggested the plan, now there are thirteen of these cosy household Shelters from winter rain and scorching summer sun in various parts of the metropolis. There must have been a somewhat inattentive attendant at the Shelter in which, according to an amusing cut in one of the comic papers, an old lady of imperfect vision blandly seated herself, exclaiming when at last even *her* patience was exhausted, "When *will* this car go on?" since according to the rules only cabmen are to be admitted, the drivers of the first two cabs on the rank being excluded from the privilege. Tea, coffee, bread and butter, are the refreshments supplied, the attendant undertaking to cook for a halfpenny anything which any driver may bring in. (This engagement, if literally interpreted, might be found to possess a somewhat inconvenient elasticity: suppose one cabman brought in his family's Sunday dinner of leg of pork over potatoes, and another a "toad-in-the-hole," two feet by one and a half.) The attendant is further expected to keep the Shelter clean and tidy, to allow no bad language, card-playing, or gambling, and to place no notice, and to receive no picture or publication in the Shelter without the sanction of the Shelter Fund Committee. The proprietors of the *Graphic*, *Fun*, *Judy*, and *The Animal World*, have put the Shelters on their free list. At first tickets of admission were issued at one penny a day, and not more than fourpence a week. Sixty thousand of these

tickets were taken in a year ; but since cabmen as a body object to pay for admission merely, they are now allowed to enter the Shelters without any charge. The attendants, instead of receiving these pence as wages, are now paid out of the slightly higher prices they are authorized to ask for the refreshments they serve.

At King's Cross, adjoining the Metropolitan Railway Station, hard by the Great Northern and the Midland Termini, and not far from Euston Square, there is a Shelter on a larger scale,—the ground floor, namely, of the Cabmen's Mission Hall. Here cabmen can get a “warm” and a “wash,” hot water for their tea or coffee and conveniences for cooking their meals. In connection with this Mission there are indoor and open-air services, prayer-meetings, and a Sunday-school. The missionaries also visit the cab-drivers on their stands and in their homes, when sick or dying, and publish a monthly periodical called *The Cabman* expressly for them. We are now pretty familiar with prize-fighters turned revivalist preachers, but some people will perhaps still be surprised to hear that there are converted cabmen who run in from their ranks to take an active part in revival prayer-meetings, and that at a tea meeting which recently took place at the Mission Hall a cabman played the harmonium accompaniment to the hymns, and afterwards delivered an evangelistic address. A free cocoa supper followed the ninepenny tea. The religious revellers quaffed the somewhat viscously flowing bowls of their substantial beverage until nearly midnight, when the Chairman, Mr.

S. Morley, M.P., had to hurry off to the House of Commons, driven, I presume, by one of his fellow guests. This is not the place in which to speak of the spiritual work of the Mission, but I may record a very practical little bit of secular good brought about through the interposition of its minister and superintendent, Mr. John Dupee. One of the black sheep amongst cabmen, whose licence had been suspended, came to hear Mr. Dupee preach a funeral sermon on the death of a friend who had also been a cab-driver. From that time the man resolved to reform, and finding that he did not content himself with mere resolutions, Mr. Dupee took his case in hand, interceded with Col. Henderson and got him a new licence. "Since that time," writes his lay pastor, "the man has prospered, and has bought a cab and a horse. He says he is now the happiest man in London, and his wife says it seems like heaven upon earth. I was invited the other day to take a cup of tea with him in his now comfortable home, and my heart rejoiced to see such a change." I am afraid, however, that it would be rather difficult to find another cabman who considers himself the happiest man in London. To show what care the law takes that the cabman shall behave himself properly, in a livelier manner than by simply quoting Acts, Orders, and Abstracts, and to give some further notion of a cabman's life, let us introduce one of, perhaps, exceptional ill luck, send him wandering like a scapegoat through the wilderness of London, and then hear from his own lips an account of his adventures

Here is his "description," as given on the margin of his licence :—

Age : fifty-four.

Height : five feet, seven inches.

Eyes : reddish brown.

Hair : grey and sandy.

Complexion : mottled.

In the body of that document, granted him, in spite of his non-official appearance, "By order of one of Her Majesty's principal Secretaries of State," his name is given as Azazel Mullitt.

*Azazel loquitur :—*

"What's the good o' goin' to bed? It's past five now, and I must be at the yard again at a quarter to ten. What's the use of a cabman having wife and kids? They ain't no pleasure to him. He scarce ever sees 'em. He's on'y got to keep 'em, that's all. What I'm to do, I don't know, with all them summonses out agin me, let alone a family. And now they must go and clap yard money on. Don't I pay enough for my cab, without having to pay for the cleaning of it? Eighteen shillin's a day I pay : *there's* a nice bit o' money to have to get afore I earn a penny for myself! I wish I was back cobbling, I do ; you could take it out of an old boot, and ease your feelinks. Swell Max pays twenty-two shillin's a day, but then he's got a shofle.\*

\* The average payments made to cab-owners by drivers are at present :—

During the season, hansom 19s. ; four-wheelers 16s. per diem.  
For the rest of the year 16s. 6d. and 14s. respectively.

"Season, indeed! The papers said it was to be a good un; but it's the wust I ever knew. They go on getting wusser and wusser to my thinking, till at last the best time for cabbies will be when there's everybody out o' town. I can scarce keep my eyes open, but there's no goin' to bed for me. How that boy o' mine do snore! It don't trouble him, it don't, that pound I've got to pay because I forgot to give notice I was goin' to move in here. Why can't a cabman live where he likes, like other honest folk, without the pollis a-hinterferin'? He ain't a ticket-o'-leave man. What a cabman's got to remember would puzzle the larned pig.—I say, what's come o' my badge? Just my luck! I've lost it, sure as a gun; and now if I go for a new un there'll be three bob to pay, and if I drive without one there'll be forty. I've been up so orfen I'm half afeared the beak 'll revoke my licence: let's see, how long is it since it was suspended last? You'll suspend yourself, Azazel, at the end of a good strong rope, to make a finish of it, I guess, if things go on this fashion much longer. And here's another go. Say the beak does stop my licence, and won't believe I've lost my ticket, why there I shall have to pay five sov. for keeping what I haint got: may as well go into the Bankruptcy Court aforehand and get his Washup to order my fines to be paid out o' my diwidends. Confound them everlastin' five sovs. Why, it aint sixteen months ago I was fined five pounds for just pullin' up to give my horse a rest. '1 and 2, Wm. iv., c. 22, s. 54,' says the beak, ' You was permittin' your hackney carriage

to stand for hire, my man, in the City of London, in a place not app'nted as aforesaid by the said Court of Mayor and Aldermen, and you're an old offender, so you must know very well that for every sich offence you are liable to forfeit any sum not exceeding £5.'

"‘Old offender, your Washup!’ says I, ‘I’ve al’ays been a merciful man to my beast, if that’s being a old offender; so I hope you’ll be a merciful man to me.’

"But it was no good. He on'y laughed and fined me. Five pounds! One'd think they fancied five poundses grew in cabmen's pockets.

"Last Lord Mayor’s Show, too, there was another ‘not exceedin’—two pun, this time—’cos I didn’t know the street was stopped, and my fare had promised me a half-a-bull extry if I caught his train, so I druv on when the Bobbies shouted. In course I didn’t get the half-a-bull, I got fined instead. Then there’s the check-string: if we was fined every time we didn’t slip that over our thumbs, there’d be twenty shillin’ses enough to set up our young Princes and Princesses, as their mother, poor woman, can’t afford to do it. Arter all, though, she do pocket all our fines. I tell ye I’ve seen it down in print, ‘Payable to Her Majesty.’ Then there was that forty shillin’s, or a month, ’cos the guv’nor sent me out in a cab that worn’t fit to travel. What was I to do? Stick at home and twiddle my thumbs? or suck ‘em like the bears? If *I’d* got anythink out o’ my paws, that wouldn’t ha’ fed my old ooman and the kids, as they’d ha’ *precious* soon let me know.

"Then look here, what's sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander, they say. Which is goose and which is gander it aint for me to decide ; but look here, you agree to give me more than my fare, and then, when you've got to where you want to go to, you back out. If I try to keep you to your word, like a gen'leman, it's forty shillin's, or in default one calendar month for me again. But if I agree to drive you for less than my fare, and then think I've been a fool, and want to git what I've a right to, it's the old story over again for me—forty shillin's.

"And now look *here*. Say you're a parson, and you get two letters by the same post : the fust un you open offers you £100 a year, and the second offers you £1,000. You're free to choose, and you're safe to take the £1,000. I read the papers, and I know the way the parsons sometimes talk about the givin' o' theirselves up to the leadin's o' Prowidence. But Prowidence is werry consid'rare : it never wants 'em to take less than they're gittin', I've noticed. But look at me. A chap comes up and says he wants me to drive him two miles, and I know by the looks of him that he'll only give me the shillin'. He's scarce done speaking afore a gen'leman offers me a job that might put seven-and-six, or half-a-sov., into my pocket ; but *I can't choose*. 'The lor says, 'you take the shillin', or else pay me forty.' It's forty shillin's again, or in default not exceeding. *hetceeterer*, if I demand or take more than my proper fare, or refuse to admit and carry in my carriage the number o' persons

painted or marked in sich carriage—suppose they was all Tichbornes!—or any reas'nable quantity o' luggage. Reas'nable! Who's to decide what's reas'nable? There's folks would think it reas'nable you should carry a four-post bedstead, or a grand pieanny, a-top of your cab as a twopenny package. And then there's that neverlastin' forty shillin's, when it aint £5, or hetceeterer, for every offence against the provisions of this Hact, for which no special penalty is app'nted, and there's no complaints to be made about that. They're plenty enough, confound 'em. And folks call us surly! Why, it 'd sour a saint to drive a cab. I'd like to put a bishop on my box to buck for me for just one day on'y. He'd ha' larnt how to swear afore he druv into the yard again, I'll take my oath. But, there, we're expected to talk as if butter wouldn't melt in our mouths, all the while we're bein' blackguarded as if we was pick-pockets, and can't raise a hand to blow our noses but we're fined £3, or two months, with hard labour perhaps, for makin' use of a insultin' gestur'. If we drive fast the pollis pulls us up, an' if we drive slow the public pulls us up: we can't please nobody. If an old woman runs right under my hoss's nose, it's my fault, o' course, if she's knocked down. Same with them beastly p'ramb'lators the nuss-maids shoves in everybody's way. Fort'nately one don't bring down my hoss upon his knees, but gets knocked over itself, and then *I've* got to pay for it. The King can't do no wrong, they say, and a cabman can't do no right, it 'd seem. Say I'm tired—if you can suppose as

a cabman has got any feelinks, you can fancy that, p'raps, without tirin' *yourself* much. Well, when I've been to the yard and got my second hoss, I bargain with a hang-about to drive for me—£5. There was some queen or other, I've read, said as the name o' some place or other 'd be found writ on her heart when she was dead. Five pounds, I should say, is what 'ud be found writ on mine, in precious big, black letters, too. And if I give a mate a lift on my box when I'm hired, there's a couter for that. If I crawl, there's another; if I don't put out my pipe the wery instant I'm axed, there's another; and I can't leave my cab a single minute with nobody to look arter it, but up jumps a Bobby on to my box and drives off—and a nice mess they make of it sometimes—and there's forty shillin's for me to pay again, and all expenses. It aint wonderful we take a drop o' short wl *ln* we can git it to keep our hearts up, and then public and pollis jines together to swear we're drunk. Drunk! As if what a cabman can afford to buy could git into his head! And if them as hires him treats him and makes him drunk, it's them that should pay for it, not him. Thieves, too, they call us. Why, if I find an old bag left behind in my cab, with nuffink in it but sandwich crumbs and a bit o' greasy *Tellygrarf*, and don't take it to the nearest pollis-station within twenty-four hours, I'm liable to £10, or a month. One 'd think Gover'ment was as set on gittin' cabbies into quod as the School Board chaps is to drive the kiddies into school.

"We're looked down on as a set o' heathen. If we

are, who's fault is it? We know about as much o' Sunday as a cow do, in the way o' restin' on it. Cabby must pay for everythink. I've got to pay my master three bob a week if I want to remember the Sabbath day to keep it wholly, and I can't afford that. In course I could take a holiday a Sunday, or any day, but the chances are when I went back to the yard I should find another cove had got my cab. I'm wuss off than the hosses. I tire out two hosses doin' my work. Say I didn't go to church, I should like the rest, and to put on respectable togs like other folk, and have a good dinner, and no hurry over it, with my wife and the young uns. Or if I was a bachelor, it 'd be a treat, in fine weather, to go out to Highgate, say, or Dulwich, and snooze all day on the hay. Hows'ever, I shall get a rest one day; on'y it 'll be under the grass, not on it "



## XII.

### THE BETHNAL-GREEN SILK WEAVER.

**N** the heart of the London silk-weaving trade,—if such a dying industry can be said to have a heart,—I once witnessed, on a sweltering summer day, a Window Garden Show. The sunshine seemed to flout the mean, dusty, smoke-engrained masonry of the neighbourhood; the tropical heat caused the rubbish-littered roadways and gaping doorways to exhale almost stifling odours. It was downright startling, as well as most pleasant in and to every sense, to turn into the freshness and fragrance of a school-room, cooled by watering-pot-sprinkled little summer showers, in which were congregated lilies, mignonette, fuchsias, geraniums, begonias, lobelias, guelder-roses, musk plants, creeping Jennys, ferns, portly posies blushing in variegated, delicate beauty, set off by feathery, vividly verdant foliage, above very homely jugs,—the majority of the “exhibits” being natives of the dingy district.

But I think I had an even greater sense of contrast when, a few hours ago, by the dim light of an afternoon in this mild but moistly miserable winter, I saw on the worn loom of an often half-starved weaver in that district a piece of velvet which his master would sell wholesale at a guinea a yard. Bloomy and rich-coloured as the finest plum, its maker smoothed it with his spare hand somewhat as a trainer might pat a thoroughbred he had turned out "as fine as a star :" but what a difference in the remuneration of the trainer and the weaver !

The velvet was fine enough to sweep the floors of palaces : if those who will wear it made up in mantle or in train could see where it was woven ! The contrast between the velvet of a pall and the corpse it covers is not so striking as that between a pinched Bethnal Green silk-weaver seated at his loom, and the rich fabric growing so slowly, in spite of the swiftness of his shuttle, beneath his fingers. Poverty and luxury stare strangely there into each other's eyes : you cannot help fancying that the velvet, vicariously for its future wearers, must feel half ashamed.

Just before I turn out of sloppy, fried-fish-scented Bethnal Green Road, in which a mud-splashed yellow omnibus is the brightest object, into Chilton Street, a wretched little urchin, who has been seen prigging, darts across the roadway, with a rain-glossy-caped constable after him in full chase. The miserable little mite dives and tries to double at my very feet, but the constable has clutched him by the neck, and he screams

as a hare screams when the greyhound has clutched hers. "The b—— copper!" exclaims a billy-cock-hatted, coateed, tallow-faced mannikin who is passing, with a *crescendo* emphasis on the adjective: such is the popular applause which the police obtain for doing their duty; and small boys, who seem to have come up from the ground like ants, rush after the constable and his captive as if bent on rescuing the prisoner by the process of "small-ganging" the policeman.

Sepia would be too brilliant a hue to paint a picture of Chilton Street in. Its houses in fine weather seem made of dry, in wet of dripping, mud. Every here and there a ground-floor window is open, giving a glimpse of a cramped room in which some small industry is being carried on, often by very small industrials. In the parish (St. Matthias's) there are many young matchbox-makers, some of whom have begun to "earn their living" when not more than two years old; the magnificent remuneration of matchbox-makers' toil being 2½d. per gross, the makers finding their own paste. The Christmas dinner they get at the "Infant Nursery" is the only bit of brightness in the lives of these poor little toilers and moilers. Indeed, if it were not for the charities connected with the dingy-brown Mission House at the corner (a converted public-house), the smoke-blackened church yonder, and the more cheerful looking school-rooms not far off, adults as well as children in St. Matthias's would lead lives of almost unbroken gloom. The British workman whom high wages have made fat

and saucy is not to be found in this part of the world. To the majority of its 5,000-odd inhabitants existence means only a miserable scramble for an insufficient quantity of some kind of daily food. Weavers' oblong windows light most of the upper floors in Chilton Street, although these are no longer all tenanted by weavers. From a garret window a lean arm is thrust, and beckons to a flock of pigeons that are circling about with clapping wings. When for a moment a stray sunbeam lights up their glossy, rainbow-shot plumage, the pretty creatures look almost as much out of place in Bethnal Green as the bloomy velvet of which I have spoken.

A great many of the weavers cannot afford to keep pigeons nowadays, but the "fancy" for birds, and also for flowers, which distinguished their ancestors, or rather, in the majority of instances, predecessors,—the Huguenot refugees whom the revocation of the Edict of Nantes sent over to England,—still lingers in Bethnal Green and Spitalfields.

Close by are Club Row and Hare Street, in which the Sunday morning Bird Fair is held. It is a curious sight. Policemen are regularly told off to keep order at it, and whilst service is going on at St. Matthias's and the mission church at the corner of Club Row, and lay preachers are energetically holding forth in the open air (as they do at the other bird fair in St. Giles's), roadways and foot-paths are choked with a shouting, humming throng of bird-fanciers, loafers, and street-sellers. The bird-fanciers, in parliamentary phrase, "have it :" you

are constantly jostling against a man or a boy who carries a birdcage covered up in a "bird's eye" pocket-handkerchief. Horses and donkeys have been sold in Club Row, goats and dogs are still sold there; but birds, and the things needed to catch them, to house them, to feed them, and to breed them, are the staples of exhibition and merchandise. In front of every bird-shop there is a congestion of the crowd, staring in at the price-chalked little cages and the restlessly hopping, cheerfully chirping and twittering little birds,—critically scanning the "points" of the pigeons, or chaffering with the shopkeepers, some of whom display and puff their stock like cheap Jacks, whilst others keep up a butcher-like invitation-at-large to "buy, buy," coupled with a notification that you may "pick'em where you like." And yet though there is such a gathering and a hubbub, very little real business seems, in proportion, to be done. Most of the covered-cage-carriers seem to be contented with carrying their cages about in company. That is their way, I suppose, of showing that they are "people of property :" they keep birds and cages as other persons keep horses and carriages. When a bird-proprietor does lift up a corner of his handkerchief to let an acquaintance peep at his property, he seems to think that he is conferring a very great favour. At the Bird Fair, however, "chaffers" are backed to sing against one another, and it witnesses the exciting finish of races between "homers," carried beyond Stratford to be thrown up.

The silk-weavers were once great pigeon-fanciers, but though the taste is not, like their trade, dying out in their quarter, it is dying out, through sheer lack of means to gratify it, amongst them.

Chilton Street cuts at right angles Thomas Street, another thoroughfare of the weaver order of architecture, some of the houses in which are said to have been built for the Huguenots. Almost every front door in the street stands open, giving access to very tiny low-pitched lobbies, and dark, narrow winding common stairs without landings. Let us wriggle up one of these, like a whelk being twisted out of its shell, and knock at the door of the second floor.

The door, flush, as I have intimated, with the steps, opens, and a careworn woman, past middle age, gives an invitation to enter, in a tone which I can best describe as well-bred,—no carneying and no bluster. If I may judge, from the little I know of them, I should say that good manners are a characteristic of the London silk-weavers. They know that they are very poor—make no scruple of confessing that they are,—but they do not parade their poverty (alas, it is too self-evident!)—do not whimper over it in *ad misericordiam* appeals: perhaps it is the consciousness of the possession of mastery over a skilled handicraft which gives them a certain dignity of bearing; at any rate, if a stranger chooses to visit them, they give him quietly courteous welcome, and think no more of resenting with shamefaced sullenness his intrusion on their pinched domesticity than they would if they were

dukes and duchesses receiving a call at Belvoir or at Chatsworth.

The second floor consists nominally of two rooms, but they are only very partially divided one from another. There is no door in the wide opening, which may stand for a doorway, in what may also stand for a divided wall. Both back and front are lighted by weavers' casements running almost the whole width of the house. Inside the front window stand a few plants in pots, cut down for the winter. The boarded floors are bare. The front room, which is the living room, is furnished with the wife's loom,—a bedstead, a chair or two, some old prints and crockery hanging on the walls, and a little round table by the fire. The husband's loom and a few miscellaneous articles furnish the back room. He covers up the velvet on which he is at work with a curved lid like that of the key-board of a piano, drops like a bird from his perch, lets himself out of the pen it makes, gives me his small, smooth hand to shake, and then motions me with it to the snuggest seat by the fire. He is a spare man, considerably under the middle height, poorly clad, and, as his cheeks show, poorly fed; but he has a good forehead, the effect of which is increased by a partially bald crown, very intelligent, as well as genial eyes, and a most pleasant smile. He is said to be the best velvet-weaver in London. Leaving out my questions and remarks, except when necessary to complete the sense, I will jot down what he and his wife said to me:—

HUSBAND.—“I have been all my life a weaver. I’m 56.”

WIFE.—“Sixty-six, you mean.”

HUSBAND.—“Yes, sixty-six ; and I began when I was fourteen. I was apprenticed for seven years and a fortnight. No, that's not the custom of the trade : not the fortnight. That was because I wanted to give some time in. Seven years is the custom ; at least, used to be. There are no apprentices in our trade now, and for a good reason. Who'd bring up his son to a trade he can't make a living by ? It's next door to starvation. Our trade is dying out, and a good thing, too. Why, there used to be eight or nine thousand of us. When ? Well, say in 1826, and now there's not a thousand. I told my master once that there'd soon be an end of us, and a good thing, too. ‘Why, so?’ says he. ‘Why, sir,’ says I, ‘who'd apprentice his son to learn starvation ? Would you like to have your boy taught such a fine trade as that?’ Of course he couldn't say he would, but he says : ‘You may thank your fine Free Trade for it all. What's the good of cheap bread to you, if you've got no money to buy it with?’”

WIFE.—“Ah, the masters can take it easy. They can make fortunes, however things go,—have their fine houses and carriages,—grind feasts for their rich friends out of *poor* folk !”

HUSBAND.—“We've appealed to the masters : tried to get sixpence a yard more for velvet, but it was no good. We've no union. Ours is too poor a trade to help itself, —and so, of course, it must go to the wall,—and the sooner the better, as I said, if there was only anything

else we could do. But what are we fit for? It's the Germans that beat us out of the market. Little enough we get to eat, but they can live cheaper than we do, and thrive on it. So they can make cheaper silk than we can. It's a long way inferior to our work, but it's cheaper; so ladies now-a-days will buy it even if they have to chuck it away after wearing it twice."

WIFE.—"And English silk isn't what it used to be. Haven't you noticed, sir, how ladies' dresses cut through just sitting down on them? and silk umbrellas crack just by the opening of 'em? That's because of the jute the masters give out and the hard dye."

HUSBAND.—"*Gum*, sir? I'm coming to that. Silk goes to the dyer's weighing sixteen ounces to the pound, and comes back weighing from twenty-four to thirty; and slight goods are sent to the dresser's to be stiffened out with gum, and passed through rollers to make them look splendacious. Thank you, sir, and the gentleman who told you so. I believe I *may* say that I can do my work as well as most men, when I've got it to do,—velvet and silk, plain and figured. Silk used to be 2s. 6d. a yard, now it's 1s. to 10d.

WIFE.—"And I used to get 1s. for what I get 6½d. for; and no allowance is made for the picking and that. If you'll come to my loom I'll show you. There, it will take me from two hours and a half to three hours before I can begin work on it,—work that will pay me."

HUSBAND.—"Perhaps, when I'm in work, I can make 20s. a week on the velvet. I know some that don't make

more than 8s. Best times I remember? Well, when I was about twenty I could make £2 a week. Worst time? Now's the worst time: I don't see that things can be much worser. Three shillings and ninepence a week I pay for this floor: it used to be 3s. You know how silk-weaving first came into these parts? Well, this house was one of them built for the French Protestants. No, there aint many of the old French names left in the trade now: they've cut it, I suppose, and a sensible thing too. I'm true-born English,—a Londoner born and bred,—I was never out of London. Yes, the masters do want us to move into the country,—to Braintree and so on,—but if we did they'd take a penny a yard off the silk and sixpence off the velvet. Such work as mine must be done by hand: no 'chnery could do it. Did you ever see velvet made?"

He goes to his loom, seats himself on his perch, lifts the curved lid, and, with his feet on the treadles, looks as if he were about to perform on some old-fashioned musical instrument wasted to a skeleton. "Feel it," he says, smoothing the bloomy fabric lovingly: "my master will get a guinea a yard for that. Can you see the groove in this?" he goes on, taking up a gold-coloured wire.

"Not without spectacles," his wife confidently answers for me.

Then he sets to work with his shuttle and his wire, explaining that to make one inch of a breadth of velvet he must shoot the shuttle 180, and "cut out the wires" 60 times.

"It used to be 48 wires to the inch, but now we've to do 60 for the same price," he says. "That's since 1851. Our trade has been going down ever since the Great Exhibition that Prince Albert thought would do so much good to everybody."

"It wouldn't do for him to drink, would it, even if he had got the money?" remarks the wife, as she watches her husband's nimble and yet most tedious work.

"Can't afford pigeons now," he replies to an inquiry as to whether he keeps them.

The Bird Fair is mentioned.

"Oh, all sorts come there, from all parts of London," he says, in a slightly *de haut en bas* tone: "but we weavers used to breed the rare kinds."

"I see," I answer. "You look *down* upon the Bird Fair: *you* were the aristocracy of the fancy."

He does not say so, but he smiles as if he thought so.

At the foot of another common stair, thinly carpeted with a fresh sprinkling of sand, stands an old woman, inhaling such "fresh air" as can be found in Thomas Street.

"That's my name," she says, when I inquire for Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, and pilots me up to another second floor, similar to the one already described. At first it looks more furnished than the other. It has a tall four-post bedstead, a towering chest of drawers, and more chairs.

"Ah," says the old man, who is sitting by the fire, with his spectacles laid on the open Bible placed on the little round table before him, when his furniture is

noticed : "Ah, those were bought many a year agone, when I was young, and things were bright: they wouldn't fetch many shillings now."

"If you was to look at them cheers," the old woman adds, "you wouldn't find much of the first bottoms left in 'em: but better patches than holes, I say."

The old man, like his neighbour, is hard of hearing,—a common complaint amongst weavers, I fancy,—caused, I suppose, by the clacking of their looms. The poor old woman, who tries hard to be cheerful, has therefore to take the leading part in the conversation.

"He's seventy," she says.

"Hasn't been fit for work for two years. He's double-ruptured, and has got a tumour on the chest, through pressing for'ard at the loom. And I'm out o' work, too. That (pointing to the silent loom in the back room) is all we've left among us, and it's doing nothing. Worth to sell! Who'd want to buy a loom now-a-days, sir? You could only sell it for firewood. Mayhap, it may have been worth a pound or two once. What we should have done without Mr. Jeakes (the vicar of the parish), I don't know. It grieved me to see him looking so white and ill. He's a real, kind Christian gentleman, that means well to the poor, and does it, instead of only talking about it."

"Never had a penny from the parish, I'm thankful to say," the old man puts in, "though I've lived in it all my life; never was out of it,—lived out of it: of course, I've

been outside the parish bounds. Once I got as far as Gravesen'; so I may say I've smelt the sea."

"Were you married in London?"

"Yes, sir, at Stepney Church, if you'd like to see it: show him."

The old woman trots to the wall, and takes down what I suppose to be a view of Stepney Church, but the black-framed oblong turns out to be their faded "marriage lines."

They both laugh as heartily as such weakly creatures can over their mistake, when I explain to them that I did not want to know *whether*, but *where*, they had been married.

"I thought perhaps, you might like to make sure, sir," says the old man, still feebly chuckling; and then the two poor old bodies look at one another as if, for a moment, some faint remembrance of the way in which they used to look to each other in their far-off "sweethearts" days had come back to them.

"He's been at it ever since he was nine or ten," the wife says.

"No, he was never apprenticed, only to his father. When I'm at work weaving, mayhap I may earn five shillings a-week. Only a shilling a-week I earn at cotton winding. There's two old ladies up above now winding. How on earth they live God only knows. They've never had parish relief, and their rent is 2s. 6d. a-week. It's only one room. We pay 3s. 3d. for our floor."

"My poor brother was in last week," says the old

man. "He and his wife only make 6s. a-week between them. How can they live on that? You want a bit o' meat to keep your strength up for weaving : it's hard work, though it mayn't look it. What strength can a man get out of tea and bread and butter?"

"But that's what we mostly live on," says the old woman, "with now and then a herring or a few sprats. If the poor children can get a smear of treacle to their bread, they think it a great treat. No, my rate of pay isn't regular. It's according to the work, 8d., 7d., 6d., down to 5d. a-yard ; and my poor mother used to make her two guineas a-week."

"Ah, that was when she was alive," says the old man, in a tone which seems to imply that death brings no rest to weary silk-weavers, and that in her grave his mother-in-law is still plying the shuttle. "Things are very different now."

Let us next pay a visit to a younger silk-weaver with a young family. He lives on a top floor, to be reached by windingly plodding upstairs until you knock your head against a door. It is opened by a woman of from five to eight and twenty. She has not a bad figure, and perhaps when she was a child had a tolerably pretty face ; but want has made her cheek bones stand out, and her eyes are set in red rings of inflammation. The room holds her loom and her husband's, a bedstead (on the unmade bed of which lie the baby and a cat), a table, two or three chairs, a few clothes hung upon a string to dry,—and very little else inanimate. The eldest of five children,

born in six years, has trotted off to school in dread of the School-Board Officer. Baby's predecessor died "in fits." Two pleasant-faced but sadly pasty-faced toddlers, wonderfully clean and neat, considering their parents' circumstances, stare at the stranger with big eyes expanded to the utmost. When a mite is offered to the mites, and they are asked if they know how to spend it, the mother answers for them gratefully, yet bitterly, "It will buy them something to *eat*." Baby—such a pretty wee white shrimp, with such big blue eyes—is lifted out of bed to be commiserated on his or her "shocking arm." Baby has been recently vaccinated, and the mother, although quick-witted enough in most things, seems to think that compulsory vaccination is another of the wrongs which the rich inflict upon the poor.

If she could only realize what small-pox would be in that thickly-peopled room! "Yes, I work," she says, "when I've time,—when I've done up the place and dressed the children, or when they're abed. But it isn't much I can do with a baby, and them two so little: perhaps I may earn 8½d. a day, sometimes. Besides waiting at the master's we lose about a quarter of our time doing work for which we get no pay. It will take me two hours and a half to get this ready," she explains as she fingers the blue, flossy threads stretching along her loom.

The husband comes forward in his shirt-sleeves. He is a stubbly-bearded, prematurely aged man, of about three or four and thirty, with stooping shoulders, hollow

cheeks, and deeply sunken eyes. He is civil and pleasant to speak to, but not so hopelessly resigned to his lot as the older men. "Yes : they're nice little uns," he says, "and it's hard for a man to see his children dragged up this fashion and not to be able to better it. No : we've no Union in our trade,—there's too much female labour in it. A good, strong girl could really do my work. But that's a fine piece of velvet : that would look well, would it not, sir, in St. Paul's churchyard, made up into a lady's cloak ? How much a yard do you think I get for weaving it?—Five shillings!—I wish I did. No : 3s. 9d. ; and working twelve to thirteen hours, perhaps I may make 2s. 6d. a day. Just see where I began this morning,—don't it look a little bit ? If you were to come in at nine to-night you'd find me at work. We light the lamp up there ; and when I've finished this job, I don't know where I shall get another. I don't believe I made more than £20 last year. Live, sir? We don't live,—only just muddle to keep off dying. When people talk to me about the price of meat, I often say that it wouldn't matter to me if there wasn't no meat at all. We never get none,—'cept, perhaps, now and then half-a-pound of bullock's liver between the six of us.

"Yes : those are my pigeons—the two ; not that one, —he's a stray. I scarce ever go out : I've got no money to spend—"

"He never has a half-a-pint o' beer," says the wife.

"So I was told that I ought to get something that would make me take the air—"

He opens the window, and we look out on sloppy little backyards, grimy tiles, which even the pouring rain cannot cleanse, and black chimney pots, down and round which the smoke is being beaten.

"And I bought a pair of pigeons for 1s. 4d. I sell the young uns, and that pays for their keep. I tried breeding canaries once, but, let alone a profit, they didn't even pay for their seed. So, of course, I didn't keep canaries long.

"Well, yes, sir, I'll own I once was driven to apply to the parish, and I was blackguarded as if I'd robbed a church. That's all they could bring against me,—that's the great crime I've committed,—I'm *poor*. It was to bury the poor child. How was I to raise £2? So I went to the parish. I happened to go in a coat that a lady gave me,—there it hangs. If she hadn't given it to me I shouldn't have had a coat at all; and because I'd a coat on they said that such a gentleman as me ought to be ashamed of himself to come begging. They needn't have told me so: I *was* ashamed enough to have to ask any one's help to bury my poor little un. There was some talk of setting me to stone-breaking. Why, stived up here all day as I am, I could scarce have lifted the hammer, and my hands wouldn't have been much good for weaving afterwards.

"Says one of 'em, 'We've all our troubles to bear, my man.' Thinks I to myself, 'Perhaps you may, but troubles

are a deal easier to bear when you've good food and fires and clothes, and no likelihood of losing of 'em. Whatever sorrows you've had, you've never had the sorrow of a hungry belly, and half-a-dozen more hungry bellies round you that belong to ye!"

**THE END.**

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